

THE TRIUMVIRATE OF CREATION

“Vaak (spoken word) & Akshar (alphabet)”,
 “Tattvas (elements)” & “Gunas (qualities)”
 And
 “The Triad”
 (According to the Upanishads)

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English Exposition by:-

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia

Ayodhya (Faizabad, U.P.)

Full address of Author—36-A, Rajghat Colony, Parikrama Marg,
 P.O.—Ayodhya, Pin—224123
 Distt.—Faizabad, U.P. India.
 Mobile: +919451290400, +919935613060

Website: < www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com >

Email of Author: (i) < ajaichhawchharia@gmail.com >

(ii) < ajaikumarbooks@gmail.com >

Facebook ID < www.facebook.com/ajaikumarchhawchharia8 >

Linkedin: www.linkedin.com/AjaiKumarChhawchharia

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Language: English.

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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED LORD RAM

I dedicate this Book to Lord Sri Ram who is my dearest of dear, most beloved, the essence of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated.

Nothing that I write is of my own creation. It is the Lord who is getting it done. So I deserve no credit. However, being an ordinary man like the rest of us, I may have committed errors, and for those I beg forgiveness. I hope this book will help to continue the great tradition of singing the glories of the different aspects of same indivisible one Divinity in order to meet diverse needs of the Soul, the Spirit, one such being to find peace and happiness amidst the surrounding turmoil of the world by being able to spend some time in the thoughts of the Divine Being, the same 'Parmatma', the same Lord known by different names in different tongues.

I submit this effort at the holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram, and surely also to Lord Hanuman who was very dear to the Lord and an incarnation of Lord Shiva himself, with this humble little prayer that comes to my lips: 'Lord God; Glorious and Blessed be Thy Name. I yield Thee my most hearty thanks and reverential gratitude that Thou hast given me the honour and the privilege and the opportunity to serve Thee and fulfil Thy desire to spread Thine Good Word for the good and welfare of the human kind through the Books Thou hast got written through these humble hands of mine. And for that mercy and graciousness of Thee, I shall ever and for ever remain Thine grateful and thankful and obliged.'

I hope the reader will find my book useful and interesting. Since English is an international language, this book will help the English speaking world to access this masterpiece of classical Indian scriptural text.

"He leadeth me! O blessed tho't!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!" [A Hymn by: Joseph Henry Gilmore in 1862.]

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia
Author

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PREFACE

The Upanishads are ancient Indian scriptures that are highly respected and greatly admired for their systematic approach to any given subject of study, and for their analytical exposition on the myriad mysteries of this creation. The Upanishads are the philosophical and expository part of the ancient Vedas, analyzing complex subjects that are very abstract on their face, but so beautifully explained by the Upanishads that a careful reading of these excellent treatises helps one to unravel and understand the most esoteric of concepts of this creation.

In this Book ‘The Triumvirate of Creation’ we shall read about what the Upanishads have to say on the following three fundamental aspects of creation—viz. (i) The ‘Vaak’ or the Spoken Word and how it came into being, and the ‘Akshar’ or the Alphabet that is fundamental to every language and the foundation on which the Vaak is built, (ii) The ‘Tattvas’ or the Basic Elements that constitute the essential building blocks of this vast creation just like bricks of a house, and (iii) The ‘Gunas’ or the Basic Qualities that determine the character of every entity that came into being in this creation. These three topics have given this book the name ‘Triumvirate’.

The first Chapter no. 1 deals with the ‘Vaak’ and the ‘Akshar’. It is divided into 2 Sections.

Section 1 describes how the languages and the spoken word evolved since the dawn of creation. Since the basis of our study is the Upanishads which are written in Sanskrit and belong to ancient Indian philosophy, the concept of Akshar is also studied in the context of the Sanskrit language. The Akshar helped to give information and spread knowledge in a tangible and understandable form because it gave rise to language, the fundamental tool for this purpose.

The ‘Vaak’ was the medium by which the information and knowledge expressed by means of the Akshar (alphabet that helped to form any language) could be disseminated and spread. The Vaak helped the wisdom and the knowledge of the teacher to reach a wide range of disciples who collected around the former to learn, and the teacher got an opportunity to explain the most complex and esoteric concepts that mere expression in words constituting of the Akshar won’t do. Therefore, we can say that the spoken word, the Vaak, literally gave wings to the letter or the alphabet, the Akshar.

Section 2 deals with another connotation of the word ‘Akshar’. Since the Upanishads have all had an open approach to the study, research and analysis of all topics they deal with, emphasizing the metaphysical and philosophical angle of the concept of Akshar was a part of their study. They dealt with Akshar as not merely being lifeless letters, but as a manifestation of the living ‘consciousness’ that pulsates with life. After all, only a living being would speak and read. No dead entity has use for the alphabet of the spoken word.

Hence, the Upanishads treated ‘Akshar’ not only as the alphabet that helped to form the language which in turn formed the framework for dissemination of information and knowledge, and the ‘Vaak’ which helped to explain and spread the information and knowledge expressed by the medium of the Akshar, but the Upanishads also treated the Akshar as a synonym for ‘Brahm’, the supreme cosmic entity known as Consciousness, that is also Akshar—meaning that it possessed the virtues of being ‘Akshar’, i.e. it is ‘imperishable, eternal and immune to decay and degeneration’.

Now, there is an interesting spin-off to this observation. The ancient sages and seers who conceived and wrote the Upanishads were naturally very observant, wise, enlightened and analytical. They found that this creation and the world were marked by a lot of variation; the different places on earth varied from one another in all parameters. So they concluded that the Akshar, the alphabet, too must have a lot of variations. This gave rise to myriad languages with their own alphabets, and myriad ways in which the same body of knowledge was disseminated through the spoken word.

Any student of mathematics and science would know that if one understands the basic formulas and principles, then no matter what the problem is, it can be solved very easily. Likewise, it is easy for us to understand that if one comes to grips with the esoteric concept of Akshar and Vaak as propounded in the Upanishads in the context of the Sanskrit language in which they were written, the same principles would also help one to understand how the different languages of the world evolved, and the way they are spoken.

But then a problem arose in the mind of the ancient sages and seers. The knowledge that they preached was the ‘truthful and real knowledge’. ‘Truth and Reality’ have no variations; they are uniform and steady, not like the changeable nature of the world nor like the variety of languages and their alphabets. So how was one to explain this?

The ‘Truth’ had to be one and universal, and not variable like the Akshar and the Vaak used to tell about it. So, what was this ‘Truth’? Then, these wise and erudite sages and seers thought of ‘Brahm’, the entity that was universal, uniform and everlasting, that was beyond the limited parameters of this world and creation, that did not change from region to region, from time to time, that was steady and constant, and that was imperishable and immune to decay and decline. This Brahm was called ‘Akshar’ too—because the word Akshar also means something that is imperishable, that does not decay and decline, and that remains steady and constant. Since ‘Truth’ too has these qualities, therefore ‘Brahm’ and ‘Truth’ were equated.

Now, there was another important factor to consider. The Vaak (spoken word) and the Akshar (the letters of a language) were relevant only to a living world, for no dead entity either speaks or reads. So therefore, this Brahm was a ‘conscious’ entity. Since it was universal as well, it represented the cosmic Consciousness. Brahm, hence, was the cosmic Consciousness. This representation of Brahm completely fits

the picture of creation—because only a ‘living and conscious entity would read, speak and propagate’, the benchmarks of this living world.

Therefore, the word ‘Akshar’ was explained by the Upanishads in the context of Brahm as well. So we shall also read about it in this Chapter by citing some specific Upanishads that highlight this aspect of Akshar.

The second Chapter no. 2 deals with the ‘Tattvas’. They are the fundamental units or elements of creation. They are the basic building blocks of this creation around which the entire edifice is built just like bricks used to construct a house. A house is built brick-by-brick, and so is this creation which initially had only single Tattva to start with but gradually expanded with addition of more and more Tattvas.

The third Chapter, no. 3, deals with the ‘Gunas’ and explains how the three basic qualities inherent in every living being, i.e. the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna, and the Tama Guna, influence and mould the character of each single individual member of this creation.

And finally, Chapter no. 4 tells us about the ‘Triad’ of Creation. These are the different components or facets of creation that have three aspects.

I hope this book will provide a new window to understanding to the secrets of our creation as they were investigated and solved by wise ancient sages and seers.

Date: 1st October, 2015

Author: Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia.

Full address of Author—36-A, Rajghat Colony, Parikrama Marg,
P.O.—Ayodhya, Pin—224123
Distt.—Faizabad, U.P. India.

Mobile: +919451290400, +919935613060

Website: < www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com >

Email of Author: (i) < ajaichhawchharia@gmail.com >

(ii) < ajaikumarbooks@gmail.com >

Archive.org: https://archive.org/details/@ajai_kumar_chhawchharia

Facebook ID < www.facebook.com/ajaikumarchhawchharia8 >

Linkedin: www.linkedin.com/AjaiKumarChhawchharia

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THE TRIUMVIRATE OF CREATION

(According to the Upanishads)

Chapter 1

(Section A)

“Vaak: The Spoken Word” & “Akshar: The Alphabets of a language”

The great Kashmiri philosopher named Abhinavgupta has given a meticulous account of the relationship of the vowels and consonants of the Sanskrit language with the creation of the cosmos in his work ‘Tantrasaar’ and ‘Paratrishika Vivarana’.

Now, let us briefly and in a common-man’s language see the fundamental principles that govern the origin of the vowels and the consonants as well as their relationship with the creation of the world as outlined in these great works.

The two entities, i.e. the “Vaak” and the “Akshar” are closely related to each other. While the ‘Akshar’, the alphabet, forms the basis of all languages, written or spoken, as it forms words that have meaning and can convey ideas, the ‘Vaak’ or what is spoken is Akshar put into practice.

Sound is the primary indication of life in this creation. It is from the cosmic sound known as Pranav and symbolised by the word symbol OM (ॐ) that the entire creation has come into being. Why is it so? Because it was the same energy that produced the cosmic sound that was also responsible for igniting the process of creation.

The alphabet is like the brick used to construct a house. Alphabets combine to form words, and then sentences and paragraphs. But how is the knowledge trapped in a written word made to reach far and wide? Well, it is by the means of the ‘spoken word’ that knowledge is spread and doubts removed.

The teacher may be very wise and enlightened and learned. But how will he transmit his knowledge and wisdom to the next generation if he does not speak and explain what is in his mind? To disseminate information, both the word and the speech are needed. Simple gestures are not able to convey ideas and explain things. To do that words are needed, words that can be ‘spoken and transmitted’. And for words to have existence, ‘alphabet’ is needed.

So we see the close relationship that exists between the Akshar (the alphabet) and the Vaak (the spoken word).

The Origin of the language—In the bowels of the infinite sky (Akash) is the ‘Bindu’, the ‘dot’ which represents the centre of the cosmic bowl or the focal point of the

cosmic mirror from where generates the first signs of cosmic vibrations, called the 'Naad'.

The cosmic gel was not stagnant, and its being in a state of flux meant that there was an inherent movement in it. Movement, big or small, generates energy, and this is transformed into sound energy. The energy of the sound evolved in stages—first a simple ripple, followed by successive ripples overlapping and coalescing with each other to produce larger and stronger ripples of vibration.

The cosmic gel was contained in the bowl of the sky, and the center of this bowl containing the cosmic gel was where the first ripple appeared. This was the 'Bindu', the dot, the focal point of the cosmic bowl or mirror. Just like light produced at the focal point bounces off the surface of the mirror to be reflected in all the directions, this sound bounced off from its point of origin in the center of the gel and then bounced off against the surface of the sky to ultimately spread in all the directions in different amplitudes.

Ancient sages meditated into the origin of 'Vaak' or the phenomena of speech. They discovered that 'speech' in its original and primary form is 'Paraa' or beyond reach and comprehension, the 'unperceived' form of sound that corresponds to the 'Absolute'. This primary form of sound rests in the 'Mool', or the root, which forms the basis of the rest of the sounds and its offshoot, the creation. It is also called 'Moola-dhaar' because it is the fundamental basis of the rest of things. This is the 'Brahm', the 'Absolute'.

The second stage is known as 'Madhya-maa', meaning the middle one. This stage is still unperceived and nebulous.

The third stage is known as the 'Pashyanti', which means the stage after the first phase of being unperceived, i.e. the stage that is perceived. This stage is the 'thought' or 'Vichaar'. The primary Absolute has now manifested and crystallized itself in the form of the 'thought'.

And finally, this thought is expressed in the form of vocal or audible speech known as 'Vaak' or the spoken words. This stage is known as 'Vaikhari'—expressed thoughts.

It will be noted that the 'spoken word' is the external form of the 'thought'. While the thought ('Vichaar') is hidden in one's mind and is not known to the outside world, the spoken word ('Vaak') reveals it to the world outside. These two forms of the sound are its grosser aspect that relates to the gross physical world.

On the other hand, the first two stages of sound, i.e. the 'Moola-dhaar' and the 'Madhya-maa', relate to the subtle world or the world beyond the gross of existence.

Now, to express the internal thoughts, vocal sound was needed, and thereby came into existence the guttural and the labial sounds. The phonetics of the Sanskrit language consists primarily of these two types of sounds, and they were later on given the names of the vowels and the consonants.

The vowels represent the primary forms of sound, the 'Beej' sounds because they are the 'seeds' from which are produced the rest of the sound vibrations known as the 'Vyanjans' or the consonants. The 'Beej' sounds were equated to 'Shiva', the Absolute, as well as to the vowels—because no compound word can be formed without them. The consonants are compared to the 'Yoni', the cosmic womb that had the 'Shakti' or the dynamism to form articulate sound-forms from the basic vowels. The two combined to form the 'spoken word' which, therefore, is a revelation of the combined power of Shiva and Shakti.

From the perspective of the creature, the so-called 'womb' or 'Yoni' is the 'Mana', the mind and the heart of the creature where all thoughts and emotions

emerge at the micro level of creation. This creature, it must be noted here, is a micro-cosmic counterpart of Brahm, the macro-cosmic form of Shiva and Shakti, the Absolute Being whose Consciousness is represented by the cosmic Naad.

Hence, the spoken word is an image of the cosmic Naad in its most vivid gross form, and the thought of the creature is its subtler form.

In its earlier stages, the language consisted of only the sounds that were either labial or the guttural. Then the tongue came into the picture to make some of the components of the consonants more refined—e.g. the letter ‘Ta’ of the Sanskrit language which is the 16th letter of the consonant.

As civilization developed and a necessity of proper communication tool was felt, the primary sounds were grouped into ‘words’, and words into a structured form that gave birth to the ‘language’.

As we have seen above, there are four types of Vaak or the spoken word. (i) ‘Paraa’—the first type of speech which deals with the knowledge of that entity which is beyond perception and which cannot be seen; to speak about things which are beyond normal sight and knowledge; to speak about paranormal things that are beyond comprehension and range of perception. The knowledge enshrined in the Upanishads and Vedas dealing with the knowledge of the supreme, transcendental, eternal, imperishable and infinite Brahma, knowledge which can be known only by rising above the mundane plane of existence and acquiring spiritual powers which are collectively called ‘Paraa Gyan’. (ii) ‘Pashyanti’—the second form of speech refers to speaking about things that are visible, perceived and understandable. For example, seeing Brahm in the form of the physical world and narrating about this form of knowledge that is visible, tangible, accessible and verifiable. (iii) ‘Madhyama’—literally means ‘medium, median’. This refers to speaking softly and mildly, to speak pleasantly and sweetly, to speak inarticulately and in a low voice that is difficult to easily comprehend. It also refers to a speech that follows a medium, central path, not too extreme to the right or to the left. It can veer on either side according to circumstances, e.g. using words which have double-edged meaning. These words, for an example, can show vehement anger as well as can be used just to show mild reprimand or reproach. Similarly, they can show love and endearment which may have deeper and sincere meaning, or may be simply superficial. In the context of the Upanishad, it refers to the ‘median path to Brahma’, a path well-balanced and judicious, empirical and rationale. (iv) ‘Vaikhari’—that voice and sound which is loud, clear, robust and vigorous, symbolising clarity of thought, firmness of conviction, exemplary confidence, energy and vitality. It is an epithet for Goddess of speech, Saraswati.

These four types of speech have been described in *Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 23. To quote—“The faculty of speech is divided by experts into four types or aspects—(1) Paraa (which refers to speaking about things which are beyond normal sight and knowledge, to speak about paranormal things that are beyond comprehension and range of perception); (2) Pashyanti (which refers to speaking about things that are visible, perceived and understandable); (3) Madhyamaa (to speak softly and mildly, to speak pleasantly and sweetly, to speak inarticulately and in a low voice that is difficult to easily comprehend); and (4) Vaikhari (to speak in a clear, loud and articulate way symbolising clarity of thought, firmness of conviction, exemplary confidence, energy and vitality).

Those who are experts and wise know all these aspects of speech. Out of these, the first three, viz. the Paraa, Pashyanti and Madhyamaa, are established in the

cave-like heart. [This is to indicate that unless one is articulate in his speech, unless one speaks out loud and clear what he wants to say, and unless he is honest in whatever he speaks all his knowledge would remain confined to the deep cave of his heart, and the rest of the world would not be able to see what is hidden in this dark cave. No one would be able to know what is concealed in one's heart if he is not honest and forthright in what he says.] They are not revealed.

Compared to them, the Vaikhari speech is loud and clear; it helps one to articulately say what is in his mind and heart. It is this fourth form of speech that is employed by a man to express himself (23)."

Refer also *Ganapati Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 6 which also mentions these four types of speech, albeit in the context of Lord Ganesh, as it says that all these four types of speech are manifestations of the Lord.

The vowels—As we have seen above, the “vowels represent the primary forms of sound, the ‘Beej’ sounds because they are the ‘seeds’ from which are produced the rest of the sound vibrations known as the ‘Vyanjans’ or the consonants. The ‘Beej’ sounds were equated to ‘Shiva’, the Absolute, as well as to the vowels—because no compound word can be formed without them.” The first sound represents the first vowel of the Sanskrit language, i.e. ‘अ’ which is equivalent to the English alphabet ‘A’ (and pronounced as in *son*, *run*). This is called a silent vowel and is the basis of all sounds. Its Transliteration form is ‘A’

It's more dynamic and joyful form is the second vowel ‘आ’ which is equivalent to the English pronunciation ‘Aa’ (as pronounced in *master*, *rather*). Its Transliteration form is ‘Ā’.

As its energy and dynamism increases, the other successive vowels emerge as follows—

The third vowel is ‘इ’, which has the English equivalence in the letter ‘E’ (and pronounced as in *if*). When used in transliteration, it is ‘I’.

The fourth vowel is ‘ई’, which would have an English equivalence in the pronunciation of ‘Ee’ (as pronounced in *eel*, *feel*, *kneel*), and its Transliteration form would be ‘Ī’.

The fifth vowel is ‘उ’, which would have an English equivalence in the letter ‘U’ or ‘O’ (and pronounced as in *full*, *wool*). When used in Transliteration, it is written as ‘U’.

The sixth vowel is ‘ऊ’, and it would have an English equivalence in the pronunciation of ‘Uu’ or ‘Oo’ (pronounced as in *boot*, *root*, *soot*). When used in Transliteration, its form is ‘Ū’.

The seventh vowel is ‘ऋ’, and in English it resembles ‘Ri’ (pronounced as ‘ree’ as in *regard*). When written in Transliteration, it has the form of ‘Ri R ri/ṛi’.

The eighth vowel is ‘ए’, and in English it would sound as ‘Ae’ (and pronounced as in ‘*may*’, ‘*ray*’). When written in Transliteration, it is ‘E’ or ‘ē’.

The ninth vowel is ‘ऐ’, and it is equivalent to the English ‘Aye’ (and pronounced as in ‘*rye*’, ‘*my*’). When used in Transliteration, it is written as ‘ai’.

The tenth vowel is ‘ओ’, and it is equivalent to the English letter ‘O’ (and pronounced as in ‘*oh*’, ‘*go*’, ‘*oracle*’). In Transliteration also, it is written as ‘ō O’.

The eleventh vowel is 'औ', and its English would be like the sound of 'Ou' (as pronounced in 'cow', 'now'). When used in Transliteration, it is written as 'Au'. The twelfth vowel sound is 'अं', as in English 'Ang or Ung' (and pronounced as in 'among'). It is actually the first vowel 'A' with a 'dot' on top of it. That is, 'अ' + 'ं' = 'अं'.

And finally, the thirteenth vowel sound is 'अः'. It's English equivalent would be the sound of 'Aha' (pronounced as 'a-ha'). It is actually the first vowel 'A' with two 'dots' which are like the grammatical sign called a 'colon' placed in its front. That is, it is like 'अ' + 'ः' = 'अः'.

It ought to be noted that the vowels are of two basic types—one with a short sound and the other with a long sound—e.g. the first vowel 'A' is of a short sound and its counterpart 'Aa' has a long sound. This applies to the rest of them, and they appear to form 'couples' of short and long sounds. [A and Aa, E and Ee, and O and Oo. Or, अ + आ; इ + ई; उ + ऊ.]

It was conceptualized by ancient sages and seers that the vowel sounds with a shorter sound are like the Sun, and the ones with a longer sound are like the Moon. This is because just like the Moon depends upon the Sun for its light, the vowels with a longer sound depend upon and owe their existence to the vowels with the basic shorter sound. [For example, the second vowel 'आ' or 'Aa' relies on the sound of the first vowel 'अ' or 'A'.]

When these fundamental sounds fuse, they produce the rest of the vowel sounds with the friction caused due to such fusion. [Ae and Aye, O and Ou, Ang and Aha. Or, ए + ऐ; ओ + औ; अं + अः].

A very interesting observation was made by these ancient researchers of the language. The cosmic 'Bindu' was represented in the language by the 'dot' placed on the top of any letter symbolizing its supremacy. It was called the 'Anuswara' which has the form 'ं'.

From its physical appearance this 'Anuswar' is a dot or a Bindu, and it signifies the 'fusing point' of the entire gamut of creation represented by Shiva and Shakti that have revealed themselves in the form of the vowel and consonant sounds of the alphabet. From metaphysical perspective it symbolizes the fusion of the individual Atma or soul of the creature with the cosmic Atma or the supreme Soul of this creation, known as Brahm.

The Anuswar also stands for the 'consciousness' in the creature's body—because it is from this focal point that the creature derives his life. It is the focal or the nodal point that is synonymous with life inside the body of the creature, for without the presence of the 'consciousness' the gross body is dead.

Another form of the Bindu is the 'Visarga' or two dots placed one on the top of the other as in the sign 'ः'. From its physical form also it represents the point that separates the gross from the subtle level of creation as it separates two parts of a sentence. In other words, the Visarga symbolizes the separation of Shiva principle from the Shakti principle.

[To summarise, the Sanskrit *vowels* are the following—‘A’ (अ); ‘Aa’ (आ); ‘E’ (इ); ‘Ee’ (ई); ‘U’ or ‘Oo’ (उ); ‘Uu’ or ‘Ooo’ (ऊ); ‘Ri’ (ऋ); ‘Ae’ (ए); ‘Aye’ (ऐ); ‘O’ (ओ); ‘Ou’ or ‘Aou’ (औ); ‘Ang’ (अं); and ‘Aha’ (अः).]

The Consonants—The consonants are called ‘Sparsha’ class of letters. This is because they ‘touch’ upon the basic vowel sound of ‘A’ (अ) for their formation, and also because to pronounce them the air has to touch either the tongue or the lip.

As noted earlier in this discussion, the “consonants are compared to the ‘Yoni’, the cosmic womb that had the ‘Shakti’ or the dynamism to form articulate sound-forms from the basic vowels. The two combined to form the ‘spoken word’ which, therefore, is a revelation of the combined power of Shiva and Shakti.”

The consonants evolve from the guttural sound to the labial. In Sanskrit there are five groups of consonants, each having five letters. Therefore there are a total of $5 \times 5 = 25$ consonant letters. These 25 consonants represent the 25 ‘Tattvas’, or the fundamental elements of creation, according to the Sankhya philosophy.

The first group is headed by the consonant letter (क) ‘Ka’ (pronounced as in ‘kerb’, ‘keen’). It has five letters in it—viz. Ka, Kha, Ga, Gha and Ang. They represent the five ‘Maha-Bhuts’ or the five primary elements of creation such as earth, water, fire, air and sky respectively. They are the guttural sounds. [These consonants are the following—‘Ka’ (क); ‘Kha’ (ख); ‘Ga’ (ग); ‘Gha’ (घ); ‘Anga’ (ङ).]

The second group is headed by the consonant letter (च) ‘Cha’ (pronounced as in ‘church’, ‘chain’). It has five letters in it—viz. Cha, Chha, Ja, Jha and Ieya. They represent the five ‘Tan-Maatras’ or the five primary perceptions such as smell, taste, sight, touch and sound respectively. It will be noted that they also correspond to the earth, water, fire, air and sky elements in ascending order as listed earlier. [These consonants are the following—‘Cha’ (च); ‘Chha’ (छ); ‘Ja’ (ज); ‘Jha’ (झ); ‘Ieya’ (ञ).]

The third group is headed by the consonant letter (ट) ‘Tta’ (pronounced as in ‘ten’, ‘tool’). It has five letters in it—viz. Ta, Tha, Da, Dha and Ana. They represent the five organs of action known as the Karmendriyas’. They are the following—speech, hand, leg, excretion and generation. [These consonants are the following—‘Tta’ (ट); ‘Tha’ (ठ); ‘Da’ (ड); ‘Dha’ (ढ); ‘Ana’ (ण).]

The fourth group is headed by the consonant letter (त) ‘Ta’ (pronounced as in French ‘t’). It is pronounced with the help of the tongue, and therefore all the other letters of this group depend upon the use of the tongue. This fourth group also has five letters in it—viz. Tta, Tha, The, Dha and Na. They are in effect a variation of the third group of consonants and represent the five organs of perception known as the ‘Gyan-indris’. These five organs are nose, tongue, eye, skin and ear. They correspond to their five Tanmatras as listed under the second group. [These consonants are the following—‘Ta’ (त); ‘Tha’ (थ); ‘The’ (द); ‘Dha’ (ध); ‘Na’ (न).]

The third and the fourth group of consonants stand for the gross body of the creature which has five organs of action and five organs of perception.

The last is the fifth group which is headed by the consonant letter (प) 'Pa' (pronounced as in French 'pen'). It is pronounced with the help of the lip; they are labial sounds. This fifth group also has five letters in it—viz. Pa, Pha, Ba, Bha and Ma. They represent the following five aspects of creation—Purush (the Male aspect), Prakriti (Nature), Buddhi (intellect), Ahankaar (ego and pride), and Mana (mind). [These consonants are the following—'Pa' (प); 'Pha' or 'Fa' (फ); 'Ba' (ब); 'Bha' (भ); 'Ma' (म).]

The letters in a group are arranged in order of increasing subtlety—viz, the first letter within a group represents the 'earth' element which is grossest, and the last the 'sky' element which is the subtlest, with 'water' as the second, 'fire' as the third, and 'air' as the fourth elements in increasing levels of subtlety. Since the last word of each group stands for the 'sky' element, its sound is 'nasal' because the 'nose' represents the cosmic bowl where the first vibrations that sowed the seed of sound and creation originated. This will be evident when one understands that the nose is the organ where a subtle sound is generated when one breathes, even with the mouth closed.

The sound gets subtler and subtler as it proceeds laterally as well as vertically.

The next series of consonant sounds is called the 'Antahstha'. They are the sounds of the (य) 'Ya' series (as pronounced in 'yearn', 'year'). There are four letters in this group, and they are—Ya, Ra, La and Va. They represent the semi-vowels of the 'Ya' series. The letter 'Ya' represents grossness associated with this world, i.e. the earth element; the letter 'Ra' stands for the fire element, the letter 'La' for the water element, and 'Va' for the wind or air element. [These consonants are the following—'Ya' (य); 'Ra' (र); 'La' (ल); 'Va' (व).]

According to another interpretation, the letter 'Ya' stands for 'Raag' or attachment, the letter 'Ra' for 'Vidya' or knowledge, the letter 'La' for 'Kala' or division, and 'Va' for 'Maya' or delusions.

The last series of consonant letters are called 'Uhsma' letters. They are produced by friction. They are the following—the three forms or variations of the basic letter 'Sa' (as in 'south'), followed by 'Ha' (as in 'hand'), 'Ksha' (which is a combination of 'Ka', 'Kha' and 'Sa'), 'Tra' (which is a combination of 'Ta' and 'Ra' as in *tram*), and 'Gya' (which is a combination of 'Ga' and 'Ya'—somewhat like in the word *gymkhana*). [These consonants are the following—'Sha/S' (श); 'Sha/Ṣ' (ष); 'Sa' (स); 'Ha' (ह); 'Ksha/ kṣa' (क्ष); 'Tra' (त्र) and 'Gya/ jña' (ज्ञ).]

The sound of breath, the harbinger of life and a synonym for 'Pran', the vital air or wind that sustains life in this world, is 'Hans'. This sound is a combination of 'Sa' + 'Ha' representing inhalation and exhalation respectively. This sound also stands for the symbolic Swan, the 'Hans', which lives as the 'pure consciousness' inside the body of all living beings. It is the truthful and pure 'self' and the real identity of the creature. It represents Brahm in its microcosmic form.

Since the sound of 'Sa' represents inhalation of breath, it stands for the grosser aspect of creation as the vital life-forces move inside the gross body of the creature, while the sound of 'Ha' that represents exhalation stands for the upward movement of the Pran and its liberation from the cage of the gross body into the vastness of the sky outside.

The metaphysical significance of the Alphabets has been very explicitly enunciated in verse no. 5 of the *Aksha-Maalika Upanishad* of the Rig/Rik Veda tradition. This Upanishad is the 7th one of this Veda.

This Upanishad primarily deals with a prayer rosary, and describes how the combined dynamic forces and energy of creation can be harnessed through it. The beads of the rosary are turned during prayer, and while turning each bead one alphabet is pronounced. It is visualised that each alphabet is invested with one or the other aspect of the dynamic energy of creation; the alphabets are regarded as manifestations or personified forms of the dynamic forces of creation. When the beads of a rosary are turned and all these alphabets are uttered one by one, the worshipper is able to harness the energy of creation in a wholesome manner.

These alphabets also represent the different ‘gods’ of creation, and are called the ‘Beej Mantras’ or secret formulas for these gods. These ‘Mantras or formulas’ are used to invoke their respective god, which in practical term means harnessing one or the other aspect of the dynamic energy of creation that these gods represent—because these gods are actually personified forms of different forces of Nature.

So, by invoking these gods by using their specific Beej Mantras represented by individual alphabets that are specific to them, the worshipper is able to control all the forces of creation and Nature, thereby bestowing himself with super-human powers. But like any exercise, this bears fruit only when done diligently and in the proper way.

The stupendous powers and dynamic energy of creation that are incorporated in and symbolically represented by the Alphabets manifests themselves when the alphabet is ‘pronounced’—because it is only then that energy and dynamism is actually injected in what would otherwise be lifeless letters written on paper. Just like the case when we deem that a person is alive when he begins to speak or respond to questions, for otherwise his body is as good as dead, the letters of the alphabet acquire dynamism only when they are infused, injected with the energy of sound.

We can say that it is only when the letters of the alphabet are pronounced that they acquire their strength by the virtue of the sound energy that ignites the latent energy that is inherently present in these letters but lies dormant.

This phenomenon is symbolised when we say that one should utter the different Mantras of different gods while turning the prayer rosary. It is another way of saying that one should pronounce the letters of the alphabet when turning the beads of the rosary—because the Mantras are nothing but the Alphabets. In other words, we must also learn how to pronounce the different letters of the alphabet in a proper manner in order to correctly harness the energy of creation. Wrong pronunciation will serve no purpose just like a wrong medicine with a wrong combination of ingredients, or ingredients with wrong potencies, do not cure the patient.

Thus, now we shall read how each alphabet is pronounced alongside their metaphysical symbolism. Since the ancient Indian scriptures were written in the Sanskrit language, the letters of the alphabet of this language are used for the purpose of explaining the principles of creation and its evolution. But it ought to be understood that this fundamental principle would apply to all languages and all tongues spoken by the human race. It is just like the case of understanding the basics of any field of science, whether it is mathematics or physics, and once the concepts are clear to the student he can apply them to any relevant problem in the practical world.

Now, let us list the Sanskrit alphabets and use an English word to see how they are pronounced, or how they ‘sound’ and how they are ‘heard’. The part of the English word that corresponds to the Sanskrit alphabet is in *italics* to facilitate pronunciation of the respective sound. Alongside each letter is also quoted the relevant part of the aforesaid ‘Akshamaalika Upanishad’ that tells us about the letters symbolic importance in the field of metaphysics.

The vowels—

‘A’ (अ) —This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘son, rubber, hut’.

“Oh the vowel sound ‘A’ (अ)! You are the vanquisher of death, and are all pervading and immanent (in the sense that the very faculty of speech, the origin of sound which is the subtlest of the 5 elements of Nature, is founded upon you. You are the 1st sound produced in the cosmos. You represent the entire gamut of alphabets and words which have ‘A’ as their basic root sound). Be comfortably established in the 1st bead of the rosary.”

[The worshipper invokes a specific aspect of the cosmic powers of creation or Nature that is represented by this letter, and establishes this power on the 1st bead of the rosary. By doing this he has symbolically brought a certain specific part of the stupendous energy of creation that is otherwise remote and inaccessible for ordinary people within his reach. This enables him to empower or arm himself with the dynamism of this energy, thereby giving him super-human powers and abilities that are beyond ordinary reach. This method of harnessing and empowering himself with the different aspects of the cosmic energy that are latently present in the sound that each of the alphabets produce helps the worshipper to achieve great goals in life and ensure his welfare, both in temporal terms as well as in terms of his spiritual progress.

What applies to the first letter ‘A’ (अ) of the Sanskrit Alphabets, applies to the rest of them. It must also be remembered here that all the ‘gods’ of the pantheon are actually a personified form of the various aspects of dynamism of Nature and represent different aspects of the cosmic energy of creation. In other words, all these gods are different versions of the Supreme Being known as Brahm, performing specific tasks in the administration of the vast kingdom of the Creator, Brahm.

So, here the worshipper has invoked that particular god who represents one specific aspect of cosmic energy of creation that is symbolised by the sound produced by the 1st vowel ‘A’ of the series of sounds that are compositely called the ‘Alphabets’ of the Sanskrit language. This principle applies to the rest of the letters as well.

Hence, the worshipper says in effect: “Let the 1st bead of the rosary be vested with the dynamism that is symbolised by the sound produced when uttering the first letter of the alphabet, i.e. ‘A’.”]

[Note--The 5 elements of Nature referred to above are: sky, air, fire, water, earth.]

‘Aa’ (आ) —This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘master, plaster, blast’.

“Oh the long vowel sound ‘Aa’ (आ)! You are endowed with the powers to attract. [The word in Hindi means ‘to come’.] You are all pervading and immanent. Enter and establish yourself in the 2nd bead.”

‘E’ (इ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘if’.

“Oh the vowel sound ‘E’ (इ)! You give nourishment and enhance robustness, vibrancy, vitality and strength. You are without any regrets, grief, frustration, distress and anguish. Comfortably establish yourself in the 3rd bead.”

‘Ee’ (ई)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘keel, knee’.

“Oh the long vowel sound ‘Ee’ (ई)! You give the faculty of speech the glory of superiority over other faculties of the bodies. That is, it is the speech that distinguishes a noble, erudite, learned and scholarly man from others; it is speech that is considered the best faculty of a man; it is speech that enables a man to make an immediate mark in this world; it is the speech that is a manifestation of ‘Pran’ (life) in the body. You are pure and uncorrupt. Comfortably establish yourself in the 4th bead.”

‘U’ or ‘Oo’ (उ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘full, bull’.

“Oh the vowel sound ‘U’ or ‘Oo’ (उ)! You are the giver of strength and vitality, patience and courage to all, you are the best amongst those who are considered worthwhile, essential and meaningful. Comfortably establish yourself in the 5th bead.”

‘Uu’ or ‘Ooo’ (ऊ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘boot, moon’.

“Oh the long vowel sound ‘Uu’ or ‘Ooo’ (ऊ)! You lend emphasis and vigour to the pronounced words and make them forceful and effective. The words also become intolerable because the long sound of the vowel ‘Oo’ or ‘U’, which makes a loud, resounding, exclamatory, distressful, howling and horrifying sound symbolising the reaction of a man under severe pain or distress as well as when he is astonished or panicked or frightened. Comfortably establish yourself in the 6th bead.”

‘Ri’ (ऋ)—This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘regard, ring’.

“Oh the vowel sound ‘Ri’ (ऋ)! You represent the agility and swiftness as well as the fickleness, restlessness and agitations of the mind. You are fickle, ever-changing, restless, transient and freakish. Comfortably establish yourself in the 7th bead.”

[Note: There are three other sounds that are variations of “Ri” (ऋ). They are vested in the 8th, the 9th and the 10th beads respectively. While doing so, the worshipper says

“Oh the long vowel sound ‘Rii’ (ॠ)! You caste an enchanting, captivating, endearing and bewitching spell on others; you are glorious and majestic. Comfortably establish yourself in the 8th bead.

Oh the mixed sound of ‘Lri’ (ॡ)! You bring to the fore the hidden characters of malice, jealousy, hatred, envy etc. in a person and make him fall pray to them. Comfortably establish yourself in the 9th bead.

Oh the long mixed sound ‘Lrii’ (ॢ)! You create ‘Moha’ (delusion, illusions, ignorance, hallucinations, attachments, infatuations, etc.). Comfortably establish yourself in the 10th bead.]

‘Ae’ (ए)—This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘may, ray’.

“Oh the vowel sound ‘Ae’ (ए)! You are the controller of all, and are pure Truth. Comfortably establish yourself in the 11th bead.”

‘Aye’ (ऐ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘aye, my, rye’.

“Oh the vowel sound ‘Aye’ (ऐ)! You are pristine pure, noble and righteous. You control men and other creatures of the creation. Comfortably establish yourself in the 12th bead.”

‘O’ (ओ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘oh, oracle’.

“Oh the vowel sound ‘O’ (ओ)! You represent all the letters of the spoken word and are eternally pure. Comfortably establish yourself in the 13th bead.”

‘Ou’ or ‘Aou’ (औ) — This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘cow, now’.

“Oh the long vowel sound ‘Ou’ (औ)! You are also the one who controls all the letters of the alphabet and thereby all aspects of creation. You are an embodiment of serenity, calmness, peace and tranquility. Comfortably establish yourself in the 14th bead.”

‘Ang’ (अं)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘rung’ as well as ‘mum’.

“Oh the vowel sound ‘Ang’ (अं)! You can control even wild elephants and are able to vanquish all. Comfortably establish yourself in the 15th bead.”

‘Aha’ (अः)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘aha, ahead’.

“Oh the vowel sound ‘Aha’ (अः)! You are the eliminator of death and represent fierceness of character. Comfortably establish yourself in the 16th bead.”

The consonants—

‘Ka’ (क)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘keen, kerb’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Ka’ (क)! You can destroy and antidote all poisons and give fearlessness to all. You provide welfare and auspiciousness as well. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 17th bead. [As in the case of the vowels, the worshipper invokes a specific aspect of the cosmic powers of creation or Nature that is represented by this letter, and thereby hopes to harness its energy for his own good, both in terms of his temporal welfare as well as for his spiritual progress. Refer to the 1st vowel ‘A’ in this context.]”

‘Kha’ (ख)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘blockhead, Khaki’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Kha’ (ख)! You make everyone agitated, angry, perplexed and frightened. You are omnipresent (i.e., every creature has these characteristic in smaller and greater amount in them). Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 18th bead.”

‘Ga’ (ग)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘go, give’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Ga’ (ग)! You remove all obstacles and hindrances. You are greater than the most exalted, great and big ones. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 19th bead.”

‘Gha’ (घ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘Nottingham, log-hut’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Gha’ (घ)! You are a bestower of good fortunes and auspiciousness. You can stop the undesirable activities of others such as the opponents of the seeker/aspirant. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 20th bead.”

‘Anga/ ŋa’ (ङ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘singer’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Ang’ (ङ)! You are the destroyer/eliminator of sensual objects, are very fierce, horrifying and terrible. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 21st bead.”

‘Cha/ ca’ (च)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘church, chain’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Cha’ (च)! You can destroy and antidote ‘Abhichar’, i.e. the evil spell that is cast upon a person by his enemies, causing numerous problems for him, such as causing delusions and their accompanying problems, and even his death. [That is, you can prevent anyone from casting the spell of black magic on the person who invokes your powers to protect himself.] You are very cruel and

merciless. [That is, you will show no mercy to the tormentor.] Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 22nd bead.”

‘Chha’ (छ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘catch him, ketchup’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Chha’ (छ)! You can destroy/vanquish ghosts, phantoms, goblins etc., and are very frightening. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 23rd bead.”

‘Ja’ (ज)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘judge’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Ja’ (ज)! You are a destroyer/vanquisher of female phantoms, ghosts and goblins. You are unconquerable and invincible. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 24th bead.”

‘Jha’ (झ)—This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘hedgehog’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Jha’ (झ)! You too are a destroyer/vanquisher of ghosts, phantoms and goblins. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 25th bead.”

‘Ieya/ ña’ (ज)—This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘French’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Ieya’ (ज)! You can churn (i.e., pound and subdue) even death itself (i.e. you can conquer death). Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 26th bead.”

‘Ta’ (त)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in French ‘T’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Ta’ (त)! You are a destroyer/eliminator of all diseases. You are beautiful and pleasant. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 27th bead.”

‘Tha’ (थ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘thumb’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Tha’ (थ)! You are a personification of the Moon (i.e. the ‘Moon God’). Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 28th bead.”

‘The’ (द)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘then, them’.

“Oh the consonant ‘The’ (द)! You are a destroyer/eliminator of poisonous creatures (such as snakes) and resemble ‘Garud’ in this respect. You are pleasing and beautiful. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 29th bead.”

[Note—Garud is the legendary bird Eagle or Heron who gobbles up snakes and is the mount of Lord Vishnu, the sustainer of creation and the 2nd God of the Trinity.]

‘Dha’ (ध)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in word ‘*thence, breathe*’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Dha’ (ध)! You are a bestower of all prosperity, wealth and good fortunes. You look sober; you have a charming countenance and a pleasant bearing. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 30th bead.”

‘Na’ (न)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘*not, none*’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Na’ (न)! You are a giver of all accomplishments, successes and achievements. You can cast a charming and captivating spell (because anyone who is successful in life or in any endeavour can enthrall others by his success and enterprise). Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 31st bead.”

‘Tta/ ṭa’ (ट)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘*ten, too*’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Ta’ (ट)! You are a bestower of wealth, property, treasures and food grains (i.e. a full granary and larder). You are always cheerful and happy (because anyone who is well-off financially and is well-fed, who has a full treasury and granary, is happy, carefree and cheerful in life). Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 32nd bead.”

‘Tha/ ṭha’ (ठ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘*anthill*’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Tha’ (ठ)! You are pure and help in acquiring the virtues of righteousness and nobility of thoughts and deeds. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 33rd bead.”

‘Da/ ḍa’ (ड)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘*den, duck, goad, load*’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Da’ (ड)! You enhance development, nourishment and growth. You appear beautiful, pleasant and charming. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 34th bead.

‘Dha/ ḍha’ (ढ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘*godhood*’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Dha’ (ढ)! You are vast, colossus in form and nature. You destroy/antidote poisons and fevers (diseases, torments and tribulations of the body). Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 35th bead.”

‘Ana/ ṇa’ (ण)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘*under*’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Ana’ (ण)! You are a bestower of bliss and happiness, comforts and enjoyments, liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation.

You are an embodiment of peace, calmness, tranquility and serenity. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 36th bead.”

‘Pa’ (प) — This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘pluck, pen’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Pa’ (प)! You are an eliminator or remover of obstacles, hurdles, hindrances and poisons or harmful things of all kinds. You are a provider of auspiciousness and well-beings. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 37th bead.”

‘Pha’ or ‘Fa’ (फ) — This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘fruit, full’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Pha’ or ‘Fa’ (फ)! You possess the 8 ‘Siddhis’ and are self-illuminated. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 38th bead.”

[Note—The 8 ‘Siddhis’ mentioned here are the mystical powers which are the following:—(i) ‘Anima’—ability to become miniscule in size, (ii) ‘Mahima’—ability to acquire fame and glory, (iii) ‘Garima’—ability to increase weight and importance, (iv) ‘Laghima’—ability to become light and non-serious; humility, (v) ‘Prapti’—ability to acquire anything desired, (vi) ‘Prakramaya’—strength, valiance, industry, powers, prowess, courage, valour etc., (vii) ‘Ishata’—Lordship, ability to become master, and (viii) ‘Vashitwa’—ability to subdue, influence and control others.]

‘Ba’ (ब) — This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘bull, box, but’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Ba’ (ब)! You are beautiful and remove all faults, blemishes, flaws, shortcomings and crimes as well as misdemeanours etc.. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 39th bead.”

‘Bha’ (भ) — This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘abhor’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Bha’ (भ)! You are fierce and are able to subdue and eliminate fear from ghosts, phantoms and evil spirits. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 40th bead.”

‘Ma’ (म) — This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘mother, monkey’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Ma’ (म)! You can subdue or endear even those who have hatred, ill-will, jealousy, malice and envy towards to the seeker/aspirant. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 41st bead.”

‘Ya’ (य) — This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘yearn, yarn’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Ya’ (य)! You are all-pervading, omnipresent, most pure and holy. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 42nd bead.”

[Note—The sound of ‘Ya’ is indicative of the word ‘This’. Therefore it refers to ‘the Truth’. In other words, it refers to the Supreme Being known as ‘Brahm’ who is ‘this Truth’. Brahm has all the characteristics mentioned in this invocation: it is omnipresent, all-pervading, pure and holy.]

‘Ra’ (र) — This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘*rung, run*’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Ra’ (र)! You produce heat, burning and light. You have a horrifying, terrible and frightening countenance. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 43rd bead.”

‘La’ (ल) — This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘*luck, long, lame*’.

“Oh the consonant ‘La’ (ल)! You are a nourisher and sustainer of the universe. You are splendid and illuminated (like the sun). Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 44th bead.”

‘Va’ (व) — This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘*avert, vulgar*’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Va’ (व)! You nourish all, sustain all and make all feel contented. You are pure and uncorrupt. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 45th bead.”

‘Sha/s’ (श) — This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘*reich* (German), *shawl*’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Sha’ (श)! You are a bestower of all types of fruits (rewards, blessings, boons, favours), and are pure and holy. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 46th bead.”

[Note—Lord Shiva’s name Shankar also starts with this alphabet, and he is therefore possessed with these virtues. The fruits or rewards that he gives are the following—‘Arth’ (material benefit, prosperity and well-beings), ‘Dharma’ (righteousness, nobility of thought and conduct), ‘Kaam’ (fulfilled desires) and ‘Moksha’ (liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation).]

‘Sha/ ṣa’ (ष) — This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘*show, shall*’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Sha’ (ष)! You are auspicious. Your countenance is white in colour. You are a bestower of the three fruits of ‘Artha’, ‘Dharma’ and ‘Kaam’. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 47th bead.”

[Note—The god who presides over these virtues and bestows these benefits upon the worshipper is Lord Ganesh, and one of his names is “Shadaan”. This name also has this alphabet (ष). Shadaan is the son of Lord Shiva, and the duo consisting of the

father and the son duo are the two godheads who together bless the worshipper with these glorious virtues.]

‘Sa’ (स) — This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘sun, son’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Sa’ (स)! You are the cause of origin of all the objects of this world as well as are related to all other alphabets symbolising various qualities and characteristic listed in this whole verse. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 48th bead.”

[Note—The Sanskrit word for ‘truth’ is ‘Satya’, and it starts with this alphabet (स). The alphabet indicates that whatever has been said in this Upanishad is the truth.]

‘Ha’ (ह) — This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘hunt, hut’.

“Oh the consonant ‘Ha’ (ह)! You are pure and an embodiment/personification of the word (either spoken or written). Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 49th bead.”

[Note—The word ‘Hai’ in vernacular Hindi starts with the alphabet ‘Ha’ (ह). The word ‘Hai’ means ‘it is, it is indeed, it is present’, which is an affirmative term to indicate that the Supreme Being, or ‘Brahm’ that is being invoked through the medium of these Mantras, or who is the focus of all forms of worship and to whom all prayers are offered, is indeed the Truth and Reality. Brahm is ‘here and now’; Brahm is not an imaginary thing that is far-fetched, but it is the truth and is present here and now.]

“Oh the mixed sound of the combination letter ‘Hla’! [This sound is made by the combination of alphabets ‘Ha’ and ‘La’ = ह + ल. It is a Sanskrit alphabet.]

You are a bestower of all the strengths, powers, potentials and forces. You are the chief amongst those alphabets which bestow these qualities. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the 50th bead.”

‘Ksha/ kṣa’ (क्ष) — This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘Kshatriya’ (a term that refers to the warrior class in Hindu society).

“Oh the consonant ‘Ksha’ kṣa’ (क्ष)! You are an indicator of the transcendental, supreme entity which is imperishable, eternal, infinite, absolute, immutable and un-decayable. You are an embodiment of the supreme light representing enlightened, wisdom and erudition. Comfortably ensconce yourself in the head bead, i.e., the 51st bead of this rosary (5).”

[Note—As explained earlier, this alphabet, when pronounced aloud, sounds similar to ‘Aksha’, only the first syllable ‘A’ is silent. The word means ‘something that does not decay or perish’. Hence, it represents ‘Brahma’ and forms the crown of the prayer rosary.]

‘Tra’ (त्र)—This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in word ‘triangle, triad, tripod’.

[Note—The letter ‘Tra’ stands for the numeral ‘3’. It therefore indicates that the entire creation has three dimensions—creation, expansion and growth, and conclusion. It corresponds to the Trinity Gods—viz. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder.]

‘Gya/ jña’ (ज्ञ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in the word ‘gymkhana’.

[Note—The letter ‘Gya’ (ज्ञ) is an acronym for erudition, knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment, or ‘Gyan’. Since this is the last of the alphabets, it indicates that a person who has properly understood the metaphysical importance and the significance of the symbolism why the letters of the alphabet are invoked while turning the beads of the prayer rosary, is the person who can be called wise, learned and enlightened. He knows what he is doing and what benefits it bestows. He is not a blind follower of rituals, he is not a blind worshipper or one who has blind faith. But he is a man of knowledge, a ‘Gyani’.

Sound is the first manifestation of Brahma and life. Sound itself manifests as speech, speech requires words and words consist of letters. To speak any letter, basic sound element called ‘vowel sound’ is required. Hence, letters represent the entire process of creation from the very beginning, A, till the end of the creation in the imperishable Brahma represented by the last alphabet ‘Ksha’.

Each alphabet is supposed to have divine powers engrained in them as their integral part because the scripture proclaim that ‘in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God, and the same was in the beginning with God’. (Bible, Gospel, St. John, 1/1-2); ‘and the word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us’ (St. John, 1/14). In Hindu ritualistic practices, each God is represented by a root or seed word called a ‘Beej’ word specific to that God or deity. So, by requesting all the letters of the alphabet to establish themselves and be firmly seated in the beads of the rosary, the seeker/aspirant fulfils the proclamation of the scripture that the word is God, the word is living (made flesh) because only living things are addressed and asked to come and take a seat.

Further, by including all the letters in the 51 beads, the seeker/aspirant symbolically invokes not only all the Gods but also the entire spectrum of the cosmos that they represent, along with all its qualities and virtues. By worshipping the rosary, the entire and varied manifestations of Brahm in the form of the endless, myriad and fascinating cosmos are symbolically worshipped.]

The above narration describes how the languages and the spoken word evolved since the dawn of civilization. Since the basis of our study is the Upanishads which are written in Sanskrit and belong to ancient Indian philosophy, the concept of Akshar is also studied in the context of the Sanskrit language as above. The Akshar helped to give information and spread knowledge in a tangible and understandable form because it gave rise to language, the fundamental tool for this purpose.

The ‘Vaak’ was the medium by which the information and knowledge expressed by means of the Akshar (alphabet that helped to form any language) could be disseminated and spread. The Vaak helped the wisdom and the knowledge of the

teacher to reach a wide range of disciples who collected around the former to learn, and the teacher got an opportunity to explain the most complex and esoteric concepts that mere expression in words constituting of the Akshar won't do. Therefore, we can say that the spoken word, the Vaak, literally gave wings to the letter or the alphabet, the Akshar.

Besides this, since the Upanishads have all had an open approach to the study, research and analysis of all topics they deal with, emphasizing the metaphysical and philosophical angle of the concept of Akshar was a part of their study. They dealt with Akshar as not merely being lifeless letters, but as a manifestation of the living 'consciousness' that pulsates with life. After all, only a living being would speak and read. No dead entity has use for the alphabet of the spoken word.

Hence, the Upanishads treated 'Akshar' not only as the alphabet that helped to form the language which in turn formed the framework for dissemination of information and knowledge, and the 'Vaak' which helped to explain and spread the information and knowledge expressed by the medium of the Akshar, but the Upanishads also treated the Akshar as a synonym for 'Brahm', the supreme cosmic entity known as Consciousness, that is also Akshar—meaning that it possessed the virtues of being 'Akshar', i.e. it is 'imperishable, eternal and immune to decay and degeneration'.

Now, there is an interesting spin-off to this observation. The ancient sages and seers who conceived and wrote the Upanishads were naturally very observant, wise, enlightened and analytical. They found that this creation and the world were marked by a lot of variation; the different places on earth varied from one another in all parameters. So they concluded that the Akshar, the alphabet, too must have a lot of variations. This gave rise to myriad languages with their own alphabets, and myriad ways in which the same body of knowledge was disseminated through the spoken word.

Any student of mathematics and science would know that if one understands the basic formulas and principles, then no matter what the problem is, it can be solved very easily. Likewise, it is easy for us to understand that if one comes to grips with the esoteric concept of Akshar and Vaak as propounded in the Upanishads in the context of the Sanskrit language in which they were written, the same principles would also help one to understand how the different languages of the world evolved, and the way they are spoken.

But then a problem arose in the mind of the ancient sages and seers. The knowledge that they preached was the 'truthful and real knowledge'. 'Truth and Reality' have no variations; they are uniform and steady, not like the changeable nature of the world nor like the variety of languages and their alphabets. So how was one to explain this?

The 'Truth' had to be one and universal, and not variable like the Akshar and the Vaak used to tell about it. So, what was this 'Truth'? Then, these wise and erudite sages and seers thought of 'Brahm', the entity that was universal, uniform and everlasting, that was beyond the limited parameters of this world and creation, that did not change from region to region, from time to time, that was steady and constant, and that was imperishable and immune to decay and decline. This Brahm was called 'Akshar' too—because the word Akshar also means something that is imperishable, that does not decay and decline, and that remains steady and constant. Since 'Truth' too has these qualities, therefore 'Brahm' and 'Truth' were equated.

Now, there was another important factor to consider. The Vaak (spoken word) and the Akshar (the letters of a language) were relevant only to a living world, for no

dead entity either speaks or reads. So therefore, this Brahm was a ‘conscious’ entity. Since it was universal as well, it represented the cosmic Consciousness. Brahm, hence, was the cosmic Consciousness. This representation of Brahm completely fits the picture of creation—because only a ‘living and conscious entity would read, speak and propagate’, the benchmarks of this living world.

Therefore, the word ‘Akshar’ was explained by the Upanishads in the context of Brahm as well. This aspect we will read in ‘Section B’ of this Chapter below.

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THE TRIUMVIRATE OF CREATION

(According to the Upanishads)

Chapter 1

(Section B)

“Akshar: The Imperishable Cosmic Brahm”

Akshar—The word ‘Askhar’ has two meanings—viz. one, something that is imperishable, and two, a letter or alphabet. Since the spoken word consists of letters of the alphabet, it is said to consist of the Akshar. At the same time, since the primary form of the spoken word is a sound which is an ‘non-perishable’ entity as it remains in the cosmos even after the end of the existing world, the speech that depends upon these vibrations is known as Akshar.

We have studied the ‘alphabet’ aspect of Akshar in Chapter no. 1 above.

Only a living entity speaks, and it is the ‘consciousness’ present inside the gross body that makes an entity alive. This ‘consciousness’ is a microcosmic counterpart of the cosmic Consciousness, and the latter is eternal and imperishable. The vibrations generated by this ‘Consciousness’ manifests its self as sound, both at the cosmic level in the form of Naad, and the micro level as ‘speech’. Since ‘Consciousness’ is eternal and imperishable, its inherent ability to produce vibrations, and therefore sound, is also eternal or imperishable. Hence, the spoken word consisting of units of vibrations or ‘photons of vibrations’ represented by individual alphabets is also said to be ‘Akshar’—the non-perishable.

The term is used widely in the Upanishads to indicate the imperishable/non-perishable and eternal Brahm.

What or who is “Brahm”? Well, to be brief, Brahm is the Cosmic Consciousness that is at the core of everything that exists. It is the supreme Soul of creation; it is the supreme Atma or the Parmatma of creation; it is the ultimate Truth and Reality of creation. It is from Brahm that the rest of creation with all its myriad qualities and with all its wonder has emerged.

Brahm was before this creation came into being, and it would there after this creation. The very fact that this creation came into being establishes that there must have been something from which it sprouted; there must have been some invisible power of unimaginable potentials that was also a fount of dynamic energy which initiated the process of creation. If there was nothing, this creation could not have been into existence. So obviously, there *was* something, and this ‘something’, no matter how inexplicable it may be, is known as Brahm.

Everything is perishable in this creation, except Brahm. Everything that exists must come to an end. According to the Upanishads, everything in existence finally withdraws into Brahm from where it springs forth when the time comes for the next cycle of creation—much like huge waves of an ocean. These huge waves rise from the surface of the ocean, have their own lifespan and dynamic energy, but in the end

they fall back into the ocean and vanish into oblivion, only to reappear again. And the cycle continues. The ocean is ‘Akshar’ with respect to the waves just like Brahm is ‘Akshar’ with respect to the creation.

Remember: This creation is a ‘cycle’ because it keeps on repeating itself over and over again. The hub around which it rotates is the Brahm.

As we have read above, ‘Brahm’ is not a dead, lifeless and inane entity simply because dead and lifeless do not speak or read. Brahm, therefore, is a dynamic and conscious entity. It pervades in the most subtle form, subtler than the air or the sky element, in this creation. That is, it is present even there where there is no perceptible presence of a ‘sky’ or the ‘air’ that fills this sky—that is, Brahm is even the ether as well as the void of cosmos. Thus, we can say that just like the air fills the sky from the way we understand this world, the sky fills Brahm from the perspective of the Upanishads, because nothing exists outside of Brahm.

Brahm is the universal Absolute, the unequivocal Truth, and the only Reality in creation. Remember: The ‘Truth’ is characterized by being ‘Akshar’ as it does not perish, it remains the same and diminished no matter how long the time passes.

Now, let us see what the Upanishads have to say about this “Akshar Brahm”, the Brahm that is the cosmic entity that remains immune to decay and mortal nature of the rest of this creation, and from which the Akshar (letters of a language) emerged when it desired to express its self.

The *Atharva-Shir Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition deals with this concept of ‘Akshar’ in detail in its Kandika (Canto) 6 as follows—“It is from the ‘Akshar’ that Kaal came into existence.

[The word ‘Akshar’ means something that is imperishable, that does not decay and die, that is infinite, timeless and eternal, while the term ‘Kaal’ means the factor of ‘time’, a factor which implies imposition of limits because it also means an era or phase which must come to an end to pave the way for the next era or the next phase, and it also means ‘death’ because anything that is limited by time must come to an end or die, a situation which is the opposite of being imperishable and eternal. In other words, it is from the infinite, eternal and imperishable Brahm that this finite, mortal and perishable world came into being. This is because the world ‘has a beginning’ while Brahm has ‘no beginning’. It is like the case of a huge wave arising from the surface of the vast ocean, running its course and finally collapsing back on the surface of the ocean. Numerous waves appear from and disappear into the fathomless ocean, but do any of them affect the ocean? The wave has a limited life span, but is the ocean also subjected to this limitation of time? The answer is an unequivocal ‘no’. This applies also to Brahm which is like the cosmic ocean from which the numerous worlds have arisen, and in which they would vanish at the end of their life spans. ‘Akshar’ also means a letter, here indicating the ethereal word OM which stands for cosmic sound indicating the presence of vibrations in the cosmic ether symbolising primal life in the universe. Anything that is born must come to an end. It is something which is not born that is not subjected to death. Sound had its origin in the cosmic ether because of some ‘vibrations’ produced in it, and therefore there must be some dynamic energy that must have produced these vibrations in the first place. The unknown and mystical source of this energy that generated the primary vibrations in the cosmic ether, vibrations that lay the foundation and the plinth of the grand structure known as the ‘creation’, is Brahm. It is from this Brahm that Akshar (the eternal ethereal sound) was produced, and it is eternal and infinite because it would survive the end of this world as the background vibration in ether. It

is from this Akshar that the new generation of world would evolve. Hence, the perishable creation that is subjected to 'Kaal' is created from the imperishable 'Akshar'.]

It is because of this fact that Akshar (i.e. Brahm) is said to be eternal, infinite, all-pervading, omnipresent and all-inclusive.

[The wave arising on the surface of the ocean is essentially water of the ocean and nothing else. Ocean from which the wave is created is itself water and nothing else. If there was no water, there would be no ocean, and hence no wave. So it can be safely said that the wave is a representative of the ocean. Or, that the ocean, in its basic form as 'water', is present in all the waves that arise in all the parts of the ocean. Therefore, all the waves are basically and essentially the same thing having different existences and different locations in different periods of time. Similarly, it is the Akshar or letter that is present in all languages and tongues by which the world acquires knowledge, by which the scriptures were revealed, by which the individual creatures interact with each other, by which one expresses one's thoughts, and which is a vivid sign of life in this world. Existence of life somewhere can easily be deduced on the basis of sound even though neither the former nor the latter can be physically seen, smelt, touched and tasted. This is proved by the fact that scientists train their radio telescopes to distant corners of the universe to catch any bleep of sound, say in the form of radio waves emanating from remote corners of the universe, to determine the existence of life there. In modern medicine, sound is used to determine the state of internal organs and diagnose diseases inside the body of a patient, in a process known as the Ultrasound technique. Sound is used in oceanography to research what lies in the deep bowls of the vast ocean, thousands of feet below its surface where it is impossible for man to go physically. Similarly, we can determine that there is someone behind the wall if we hear him speak or some noise is heard even though we cannot see, touch, smell or taste the source. In the present case, it is Brahm that is the timeless 'Akshar' which is essentially present in all the entities called 'Kaal' that are limited by the factor of time.]”

Atharva Veda's *Shandilya Upanishad*, Canto 3, section 1, verse no. 6 describes the genesis of creation, and in the process it describes how the “Akshar” (the alphabet) and the rest of the things dependent upon the alphabet, such as the scriptures and the hymns, came into being. It says:

“The supreme transcendental Brahm had a wish to empower himself to expand and reveal his non-dual, single and unqualified form that was invisible and most subtle into numerous forms that had various qualities, were gross and visible. To make it possible he did Tapa (penance and austerity) for empowerment.

It was then that the triad of creation came into being due to this Tapa. This 'triad' assumed many forms, such as the three 'Akshars'¹, the three 'Vyarihitis'², the 'Gayatri Chanda' having three steps³, the three primary Vedas⁴, the three Varnas⁵, and the three Agnis or sacred Fires⁶.

This supreme Lord who is known as 'Bhagvan'⁷ is the supreme Authority in creation. He is endowed with all glories and majesties; he is all-pervading, omnipresent, all-encompassing, universal and uniformly distributed throughout the whole creation; he resides in the subtle heart of all creatures (as their Atma); he is full of maverick tricks and his ways are mysterious and unknown.

It is this Lord who has revealed himself as Brahma the creator of the visible world, as Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation, as Rudra who concludes this

creation (so assiduously created by Brahma and so diligently sustained by Vishnu), as Indra (the king of Gods), as all other Gods as well as all types of living creatures in this creation.

It is this Lord that is present everywhere in this creation—in the front, in the rear, in the north (zenith), in the south (nadir), below and above, and everywhere else. In this holistic way, it is he who is everything and everyone in this creation.

It is this Lord who does everything out of his own free will and using his own powers (without any help whatsoever), and he is ever so graceful and benevolent towards his devotees.

It is he who had revealed himself as Lord Dattatreya who was glorious to look at, remained naked, was delicate and pure as the petals of the lotus flower, had four arms, was not at all fierce and fearsome, was free from all sins and evils, and was self-radiant with the glow of holiness and divinity.

Indeed, the above described form of Brahm is a composite of its Sakal as well as Nishkal forms. [All the glorious virtues of Brahm that are there in existence but cannot be physically perceived are its 'Nishkal' form, while that form which can be seen is its 'Sakal' form. For instance, the Atma is its Nishkal form while the creature is its Sakal form; Lords Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva are its Nishkal form while Lord Dattatreya is its Sakal form; the ethereal word OM is its Nishkal form while the Vedas are its Sakal form; the Vyarihitis are its Nishkal form while the earth and the sky is its Sakal form. The meaning is now abundantly clear. Both these forms compositely make up this vast creation—it has things that are visible as well as things that are there but not visible (6).

[Note—¹The word *Akshar* literally means a letter. Hence, the three Akshars are the three 'letters' of the word OM that stands for Brahm—viz. A, U and M, that symbolized the three aspects of the would-be creation—its origin, its expansion and growth, and its conclusion respectively.

²The three *Vyarihitis* are the first words pronounced by Brahma the creator at the beginning of creation—viz. Bhu from which the terrestrial world came into being, Bhuvaha from which the sky and the lower heaven came into being, and Swaha from which the vast heavens came into being.

³The *Gayatri Chanda* having three steps refers to the first and primary method of composition of verses having three lines in which the Vedas were originally revealed.

⁴The three primary *Vedas* are the Rig/Rik, the Sam and the Yajur Vedas.

⁵The three *Varnas* are the three classes in the society—viz. the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas.

⁶The three *Agnis* or sacred Fires are the following—the 'Garhyapatya Agni' which is the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice, the 'Dakshinagni' which is the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end, and the 'Ahavaniya Agni' which is the fire to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice.

⁷The word *Bhagwan* refers to an enlightened being who possesses certain divine qualities not possessed by ordinary human beings, and which are even difficult for the Gods to have. The word has two parts—'Bhag' and 'Wan'. The 2nd part 'wan' means 'one who possesses', while the 1st part 'Bhag' means 'one who is like the receptacle or womb' that harbours the following six qualities or virtues—(1) to have 'Aishwarya', which means to possess all the virtues that come under the category of having majesty, powers, wealth, fortune, opulence, flourish, supremacy, sway, dominance, glory, grandeur, omnipotence and other divine faculties in existence; (2) to have all Dharma, which means to possess all virtues that come under the ambit of righteousness, probity, propriety, virtuousness, and nobility of thought and conduct; (3) to possess all the glories and majesties that come under the definition of the word

Yash, i.e. to have great fame, glory, majesty and renown; (4) to have Sree, i.e. to possess all wealth, prosperity, pomp and circumstance, to have prestige, dignity, respect, honour, splendour and glory, as well as all other factors associated with those qualities mentioned in serial no. 1-3 above; (5) to have complete and comprehensive Gyan, i.e. to have true, deep, incisive, complete and all-incorporating knowledge, erudition, wisdom, skills, expertise and enlightenment; and (6) at the same time to have immaculate and the highest degree of Vairagya, i.e. to have complete renunciation, detachment, indifference and dispassion towards everything in this world. Hence, anyone who is endowed with the above six divine, eclectic and exemplary qualities is called a Bhagwan.

Conventionally, the word is used as a synonym for the words ‘Lord, God, Supreme Being’, and is used for someone who is glorious, divine, holy, majestic, honoured and revered.]

Now, let us read about the ‘Akshar’ as we have studied till now, and ‘OM’, the monosyllabic word that was devised by ancient sages to represent the cosmic sound produced by Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness. When these wise and enlightened sages meditated, they heard this cosmic sound, and to make their disciples understand what they had heard, they mimicked it. The sound that was produced was like the one created when one says ‘OM’.

According to the Upanishads, Brahm produces vibrations of cosmic energy in the vast space of the creation, and this energy produces a sound. This sound resembles the distant roar of a drum or thunder or passing train.

The Atharva Veda’s *Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse nos. 5 says: “The cosmic, divine, sublime and ethereal monosyllabic word OM is known as *Akshar* as it is imperishable and immortal. [As we have already seen above, the Sanskrit word ‘Akshar’ has two meanings—one is a ‘letter’ and the other is something that ‘does not decay, is imperishable and eternal’. OM is likened to a ‘letter’ because it is a monosyllabic sound. For the purpose of study and analysis of its magnificent divine aspects it is hypothetically split into three (A, U, M), four (A, O, U, M) and even six (A, O, U, M, Chandra Bindu and Ardha Maatra) components. It ought to be remembered that OM is not an ordinary monosyllable, but it is the Beej Mantra for the supreme transcendental Authority of creation and the cosmic Consciousness known as ‘Brahm’ that is at the root of everything that exists. This ‘cosmic Consciousness’ is known as Parmatma, the supreme Atma, the Brahm, the Supreme Being, at the macrocosmic level of creation, and as the Atma, the individual soul of the creature known as the Jiva, the living being, at the microcosmic level of creation.]

The entire visible world is but a manifestation/revelation of OM. In other words, the world is a visible form of the various aspects of OM. Since OM is the Beej Mantra or the seed formula for Brahm (i.e. for Brahm-realisation), this world is a visible manifestation of the latter. The visible physical world establishes and makes evident or visible the magnificent and stupendous glory of that invisible supreme Authority of creation known as the sublime Consciousness or the divine Brahm that is represented by the ethereal sound of OM.

Whatever existed, whatever exists and whatever shall ever exist in the future, as well as any other dimension or aspect of time and space which is beyond these three, are also nothing else but a manifestation or an extension of OM as a representative of Brahm. It is all-inclusive and comprehensive in nature.

Surely, everything is Brahm and a manifestation of Brahm, and nothing else. Therefore, it is also OM in a visible and manifested form. [Since everything is a

manifestation of Brahm, and OM is a word used to indicate Brahm as it is a Beej Mantra of Brahm, it follows that the entire creation is a symbol of OM in its physical form. This eclectic world view of creation creates a high level of equanimity of thought, and establishes uniformity and universality in this creation. It removes all causes or basis of dichotomies, schisms, frictions, ill-will and jealousy, thereby instilling harmony and calmness in the entire creation just like the case of the word OM which is treated as a monosyllabic sound though it has four sound components that are perfectly integrated in its sound structure.

Hence, though we assign different names and categories to different units of creation for the purpose of dealing with them in day-to-day life, it will be wise and enlightened to regard them as an integral and an inseparable part of one wholesome cosmic entity for all practical purposes.

As has been said above, OM is the Beej Mantra of Brahm. Brahm is known and recognized by this word OM. They are synonymous with each other. If this world is a visible manifestation of Brahm and an extension of its glory, it follows that the world is actually a manifestation and an extension of OM and its glory. Again, since Brahm is pure Consciousness, it follows that what is basic to this world is 'consciousness' and nothing else. In other words, if 'Brahm' and 'consciousness' are removed from this world, nothing worthy remains in it. Hence, Brahm or cosmic Consciousness is the 'Tattwa' of creation; it is the essential and basis unit of creation around which the rest of the edifice of creation is moulded.

OM has four basic sounds—viz. the sound of the letter 'A' (as in son) which represents the first aspect of Brahm symbolizing the initiation of creation, 'Oo or U' (like the letter 'O' in the word go) stands for the second aspect of Brahm and corresponds to the development, expansion and growth of the world, 'M' (as in mum) stands for the third aspect of Brahm and corresponds to the conclusion of the world, and finally the prolonged nasal sound of 'M' that is made after OM has been pronounced completely and the mouth closed stands for the fourth aspect of Brahm, and it corresponds to the time between the last creation and the beginning of a new phase. Hence, it naturally follows that the entire creation is nothing but a revelation of the four subtle and most esoteric aspects of the supreme Consciousness known as Brahm that is envisioned in the form of a sound equivalent to that made by saying the monosyllabic word 'OM'.

The four letters of OM, i.e. A, O, U and M, exist only in a hypothetical plane and are employed for the express purpose of analysis and study. It must be remembered that OM is a monosyllabic sound that is one, continuous, and unbroken sound. These letters have been imagined just for the purpose of understanding OM. This instance is cited to explain how the entire creation and the four states of existence of consciousness are indistinguishable from one another when we consider the entire creation in a holistic and wholesome manner. Similarly, this also explains how Brahm is one single indivisible and immutable whole though it has been said to have four Paads in the present Upanishad as well as in other Upanishads.]

The world is a visible and gross manifestation of what is essentially invisible, sublime, subtle and supreme entity—i.e. the visible gross physical world is a manifestation of Brahm who is invisible, subtle, sublime and supreme. The visible and verifiable world proves that there is something beyond the spectrum of visibility that is real and truthful, and of which it is an image. That essential element which forms the 'soul' and the 'basic identity' of the world is called its 'Atma'. Since it is Brahm that is at the core of all aspects of creation, it follows that Brahm is also the 'Atma or soul' or 'essence and fundamental aspect' of creation, or the 'Tattwa' of

creation—both at the macrocosmic level of creation, in which case it is called the ‘Paramatma’ (the supreme and transcendental Atma), as well as at the microcosmic level of creation, in which case it is simply called the Atma of the individual creature.

Now let us examine what the *Yog Kundalini Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 35 has to say regarding Brahm’s character of being ‘Akshar’: “That which remains at the end when all that is untruth and falsehood are eliminated is called the Brahm. This Brahm is without a beginning or end; it is perpetual, ever-present, eternal and infinite; it is imperishable and un-diminishing; it is majestic and magnificent, great and grand. It is steady, constant, unwavering and unmoving. It is free from the tainting effects of the five elements that create such perceptions as taste, smell, words (speech), touch and hearing. It is without any faults and blemishes of any kind whatsoever, it being absolutely immaculate and pure.”

The relationship between Brahm as ‘the word’ (Shabda), and ‘supreme entity’ (Param) have been elucidated in the Atharva Veda’s *Tripura Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse nos. 16-17 as follows—

“verse no. 16 = The supreme Brahm is manifested in the form of ‘Shabda’ (word having meaning and which makes sense), and when the meaning is snatched away from the word it becomes a useless collection of nonsense letters.

[This is an excellent analogy to explain Brahm. Words are made of letters, but these letters have relevance only till they are incorporated in a particular word. The word has any relevance only till it makes some sense, otherwise it is as worthless as a letter having no independent meaning or when it is simply a hotchpotch jumble of sounds. In other words, it is Brahm that gives sense to this creation. If Brahm is removed from this creation, the latter would lose its meaning and relevance. Brahm is the ‘word’, while each unit of this creation is the ‘letter’. Just as each letter is as important as the other to form a particular word, each unit of creation is as important as the other to give the entire edifice of creation its meaning, and, in the process, to fully reveal Brahm in its entirety. This is because Brahm uniformly pervades in the entire creation, and because whatever that exists is Brahm personified. In other words, to imagine Brahm only as a living being, and not, say, as the other elements of creation such as a tree or the river or the cloud would be not understanding the true nature and form of Brahm. Hence, it would be like not understanding the true meaning of a word, and misunderstanding its finer nuances.

There is another connotation to this analogy. The ‘Brahm’ when likened to the ‘word’ would imply the macrocosm, while ‘Brahm’ when likened to the ‘letter’ that forms the word would be the microcosm.]

Therefore, a person desirous of peace and bliss of the mind and heart concentrates and contemplates upon this Brahm who is ‘Akshar’.

[There is a play on the word ‘Akshar’ here. This word has two meanings—one is a ‘letter’, and the other is ‘imperishable, one that does not decay or come to ruin’. Just like the letter is the basic unit of a word, Brahm is the basic element of creation. At the same time, Brahm is eternal, wholesome, imperishable and infinite.] [16].

“verse no. 17 = Therefore, a wise man should ponder upon two aspects of Brahm. One is the ‘Shabda’ (word), and the other is the ‘Param’ (supreme, transcendental) aspect of Brahm.

When one is fully enlightened about the ‘Shabda Brahm’, he is able to attain the Param Brahm. The Shabda Brahm is a stepping-stone to the ‘Param Brahm’.

[One comes to learn about anything by the medium of words. He hears about it, reads about it, enquires about it, investigates about it from all available data and texts, and then comes to know about it. The object of such investigation has a definite name and virtues, because it is absolutely impossible to learn about something that is completely meaningless, incomprehensible and indefinable. So, in his search for Brahm which is synonymous with the Absolute Truth of creation, the seeker starts with the help of that aspect of Brahm which has been narrated in the Holy Scriptures, that is preached by wise teachers, and which is heard of and described as the only Truth and Reality of creation. How can one search for anything that has no names and characteristics, virtues that need 'word' to make sense. Otherwise, it would be like browsing for nothing in the vacant space, leading to nowhere. The Shabda Brahm helps one to identify his spiritual objective or aim; it helps him to call out to the Lord in the form of Mantras, prayers and hymns that he sings in the Lord's honour. It helps him to focus his mind and attention on the 'one' divine Being, instead of allowing his mind to wander in the endless forest of so many forms that Brahm has taken. So a wise man, for instance, uses the word OM in his spiritual pursuit as it provides direct access to Brahm.

No one has seen Brahm with his physical eyes, so one can know Brahm only by the means of the word, the 'Shabda', that is prescribed by the scriptures for Brahm. For instance, when one goes out in search of someone he has never met before, he enquires about for him by his name. Even when he meets the person he asks whether he is the same person who was being searched by repeating the name. This would help to explain the importance and significance of the Shabda (word) aspect of Brahm.

But this is just the primary stage; it is just the launching stage towards the ultimate. Shabda Brahm is not the goal, but a medium to reach the goal which is the Param (supreme) aspect of Brahm which is described by words. Hence, the main target for all spiritual aspirants should be the supreme transcendental Brahm, and not remain entangled in the words of the scriptures and repetition of Mantras in the hope that this would give them liberation and deliverance from this delusory world and its cycle of birth and death, that they can become Brahm realised and enlightened by merely learning by rote the words of the scripture and doing formal forms of worship or going to pilgrims or chanting Mantras in the misconceived hope of finding spiritual peace and bliss, or emancipation and salvation. They would be living in a fool's paradise.] [17].”

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THE TRIUMVIRATE OF CREATION

(According to the Upanishads)

Chapter 2

“The Tattvas: The Basic Elements”

What is a ‘Tattva’? The word ‘Tattva’ means something that is elementary and primary; something that forms the basis of the rest of the developments; the essence, the reality and the real state of anything; the truth; the true principle. Therefore, the Tattvas that the Upanishads describe are the elementary principles that govern this creation and the fundamental elements that act as the basic building blocks for this complex creation. The Upanishads deal with the Tattvas from the philosophical angle and delve into the reasons why this creation and its inhabitants, the living beings, are so complicated. The knowledge of the various Tattvas helps a student of metaphysics and spiritualism to understand the elementary form in which the entire creation exists, and why is there so much diversity and contradictions in this creation though the creator is the same.

These Tattvas act as basic brickwork of this creation. We have *primary elements* that were formed at the time of creation, and the *secondary elements* that developed later on as the creation evolved, and finally there were the *tertiary elements* which were the offshoots to the process of creation when the complexities of the latter increased so much so that the resultant product of combination of different Tattvas and Gunas was so different from the original ingredients that went into creating the finished product that neither was it possible to have any idea of them from the finished product nor was there any possibility to revert the process and arrive at the original state.

Our attempt here is to see what the Upanishads say and how they expound upon the basic elements of creation from a metaphysical, theological and spiritual perspective.

A word may have different connotations according to the context in which it is used. For example, we speak of a flower’s Tattva, i.e. the volatile liquid extracted from the flowers and used as various scents and perfumes. It is called the ‘essence’ of the flower. Even the nectar is called ‘essence’ or Tattva of the flower. The oil extracted from seeds and herbs are also called their Tattva or essential extracts. The common factor in all these is the ‘liquid or fluid’ nature of the Tattva. It is this reason why life is said to have emerged in water, a fluid and elixir of life and vitality, the ‘essence’ or Tattva that sustains and protects life. The primary essence of creation was not some liquid as we understand the term; it was ‘ethereal’, more like the air or wind element, resembling more closely to the something that fills the outer space above the surface of the earth. It must be understood that though ‘air’ does not exist outside the atmosphere of the earth, it is not an absolute vacuum, for there is something that lies between any two celestial bodies or planets, separating them and preventing them from colliding with each other. All celestial bodies are dipped in this cosmic liquid which is like a ‘volatile essence’ drawn from flowers. It is ‘volatile’ because it is

never the same, and that is why we say that the creation is continuously and perpetually changing and evolving. Had it not been so, had that Tattva been a solid, everything in creation would have been cast in one fixed mould for eternity.

According to the philosophy of *Tantra Shastra* dedicated to the worship of divinity in the form of Shiva and Shakti, the process of creation took the following initial steps. Before anything came into being, Brahm, the supreme consciousness and the ultimate truth of creation, known as Shiva, was established in his own radiant effulgence or self-illumination symbolising his splendorous glory, majesty and divinity. Hence he was called 'Prakash', literally meaning light. When he decided to deliberate and actually started the process of deliberation in order to start the process of creation, there was a subtle 'spandan' or a slight throb or imperceptible movement which transformed into a vibration. The waves generated by this initial vibration developed in the cosmic ether and gradually coalesced with each other to give rise to higher waves of higher amplitudes. This produced the cosmic sound called the Naad. Since the creation was conceived in the bowl of the cosmic ether, the energy of the initial sound was focused at a central point, called the focal point or the dot or 'Bindu'. This Bindu contained the combined powers of both the male Shiva and the female Shakti like a dicotyledonous seed which produced the two separate entities called Shiva and Shakti. The union of these two resulted in the unfolding of the rest of the creation. Thus it will be observed that whatever exists in this creation can be traced back to this primeval Naad. Hence, the latter is called 'Shabda Brahm', or the Brahm as sound. Therefore it is very natural to assume that all Mantras dedicated to any divine entity and consisting of the sound element (because Mantra consist of letters and words, and are chanted or repeated to make them effective) has its origin in this Shabda Brahm and gets its powers and energy from this Shabda Brahm. In other words, the Mantra contains in itself the essential meaning, form and spirit of the deity whose Mantra it is and which is being worshipped and invoked. Constant repetition of the Mantra generates so much energy in due course of time that the deity being worshipped is revealed. This is because the sound has great powers and energy as is evident when reverberation of sound waves and the resonance created by them are so powerful and forceful that they can shatter sheet glass in windows when an explosion occurs near a building.

Primarily there were five basic elements or Tattvas of creation—such as the sky, air or wind, fire or energy, water and earth in increasing order of density or grossness. From them came the secondary elements—they are the various Tattvas of creation. These latter vary according to the level and dynamics of creation one is dealing with in terms of metaphysics. Finally came the tertiary elements—they are the various Anatahakarans, the various Vikaars and Vrittis, the three Gunas etc. that would form the third layer of elements or Tattvas of creation.

These elements can be compared to the elements of material science of the modern world, such as the elements calcium, magnesium, potassium, selenium etc. which are heavier and grosser in nature as compared to other elements such as the gases oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, helium etc. which are lighter and subtler. Then there is carbon which is the base of an entire field of chemistry called organic chemistry, much like we have Atma which in association of different other elements form a vast array of organic chemicals and material products of daily use. If carbon is compared to the basic unit called Atma in metaphysics, then the other elements that combine with it are the various Gunas, Vikaars, Vasanas and Vrittis that surround this

Atma to give rise to an uncountable number of creatures of different nature, temperaments, character and personalities.

In this scenario, Brahm would be like the primary Atom which left to itself is neutral and inactive. It is only when certain changes take place in its core, such as the shift in the position of its electron etc. that the chain of reaction starts that would ultimately result in not only producing newer elements but releasing energy or absorbing matter from the surrounding atmosphere. The Atma would be more like the atom of the carbon atom which is at the heart of all organic compounds.

Krishna Yajur Veda tradition's *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 1 is entirely dedicated to enumerating the Tattwas, starting from a single universal element known as the Param Tattwa, the Supreme Essence, to ninety-six Tattwas.

There is a term called 'THE TATTVA MARG'. What is it? The *Tattva Marg* is the spiritual path that is business like and does not take one along a circuitous route to one's spiritual destination. It is a path that leads straight to one's spiritual goal. It's a philosophy that relies on to-the-point, well researched, clinically precise, empirically proven, effective and practical approach to spirituality and proven methods for reaching the citadel of spiritual elevation that culminates in liberation and deliverance of the soul from the continuous cycle of birth and death, and ensuring its emancipation and salvation for good. It is the eclectic spiritual way which is based on correct, proven and precise spiritual knowledge and its judicious and practical application which can fine tune one's approach to the actual and profound spiritual truths and reality as opposed to apparent or assumed truths and reality which are more often misleading and like a spiritual quagmire. It is the basic and essential path that any wise, erudite and sagacious aspirant would like to follow if he does not wish to waste his precious time and energy on debating as to which is the correct and effective way for spiritual elevation and realisation of the ultimate Truth that would provide him with final liberation and deliverance from this material world of falsehoods, delusions and entrapments. It is the noble path that would liberate the soul from the cobweb of birth and death and their accompanying horrors and pains, and lead him by the hand to the high ground of enlightenment and self-realisation from where the spiritual seeker stands to see clearly and witness first hand the presence of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being.

The Tattva Marg leads one to reach his spiritual destination which is compared to a 'lighted lamp'. This is a metaphoric way of saying that against the background of a dark and foreboding world full of miseries and sorrows, of falsehoods and delusions, of myriad doctrines and philosophies that create a web of confusions and consternations that are tantamount to an all-covering veil of darkness that engulfs the spiritual aspirant from all sides, if he is wise and erudite enough to follow the correct path called the 'Tattva Marg' steadily without allowing himself to be confused in anyway, then he becomes fortunate enough to have a divine and reassuring vision of the Lord as the lamp of hope and salvation just like a ship caught in the choppy waters of a stormy sea observes the beacon of the lighthouse. The divine vision of the light of the Lord is very reassuring; it indicates his august presence and it removes all forms of symbolic darkness that have been engulfing the spiritual traveler from all the sides, such as the darkness induced by ignorance, delusions, various worldly faults and taints etc. This light, by removing the fearsome darkness, cheers his heart and encourages him to move ahead with renewed zeal and vigour towards his chosen spiritual goal and speedily reach it. This goal is his spiritual emancipation and salvation, his liberation and deliverance from the fetters that had been shackling his

self or his Atma, the pure conscious ‘self’, for many births and many generations. Once the light is visible at the end of the road, he races forward; previously he was moving slowly because he had to grope in the dark. This divine and sublime vision of the Lord as a lighted lamp is a sign that he has almost reached his goal, and the destination that the soul has been searching and yearning for countless generations and numerous births, is finally at hand.

The *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 131 describes this ‘Tattva Marg’ and its spiritual rewards as follows—“For a person who has stepped on the spiritual path called ‘Tattva Marg’ to reach his spiritual destination can see (visualise) that supreme and excellent Purush (i.e. the un-manifested Supreme Being in his manifested cosmic and all-inclusive form of the Viraat Purush known as Lord Vishnu) as a lighted lamp.

What a great irony it is that the man feeds himself (by drinking milk) from the same breast (of his mother) that he presses to derive immense sensual pleasure (during sexual encounters with his partner)¹ (131).

[Note—¹This is a remarkable observation. A man is so foolish that he forgets the reality and gets deluded by circumstances and their false charms. He forgets that the breast is provided by the Lord as a vessel or container to store the much-needed milk to feed the infant creature, and not as an instrument of deriving sexual gratification from it. The same breast is subjected to two different treatments, it assumes two opposite roles and appears to be different in two different contexts for the same man, for as a child he had fed from it and had even pressed it while suckling milk from it, while the same man does the same thing as an adult but his perception changes. There is a verse in Yagyavalkya Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 17, dealing with the very concept of how the breast of a woman should not delude a man by its illusive charm. It says—“The breast of a woman severed from her body and lying unattended in a cremation ground, or lying randomly at any other place, is fed upon by stray dogs as if they were ordinary dog-feed or lump of meat”.

Thus we observe how the same thing is seen differently by three different people when viewed by them from different angles and perspectives. The child sees the breast as the pitcher filled with the life sustaining sweet milk, the elixir of life for it. The lustful man sees it as an instrument to satisfy his sensual and carnal desires. The ascetic and a renunciate monk see it is a lump of flesh lying on the gross inane body which is eaten by stray dogs.

The basic object does not change; the basic truth about the breast that it is an instrument provided by Mother Nature to feed the infant child till it is able to take care of its self remains the same, but the apparent differences of how it is treated and viewed persist. Even those who are well aware of this anatomical fact that it is as much part of the female body as her anus still wish to enjoy the sensual gratification derived from this lifeless lump of flesh that is fed upon by stray dogs in the cremation ground. This is an ideal example of how a man gets deluded and is overcome by ignorance about the real sense and purpose of anything, of how he can be misguided if the same thing is seen under the wrong light. This is an indirect way of explaining what constitutes the Tattva Marg—i.e. the proper and correct way of looking at certain thing by concentrating one’s attention on the basic and truthful essence of it, the underlying truth and reality behind it, instead of getting deluded and misled by its charming exteriors and superficial appearances, or by the myriad of ways it is being interpreted and described by numerous people creating a vortex of confusions that is most perplexing and mortifying for the aspirant.]

Now let us see what the Upanishads have to say on this concept of the TATTVA in metaphysical context.

The *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 10 describes the basic Tattvas from which the creation came into existence as follows—“In the beginning, that principle primary and primordial ‘essence’ or *Tattva* was absolutely placid and calm.

Then there were minute and almost imperceptible ripples in it just like the ones in water, indicating some subtle and secret activity. This caused the element of Ahankar (the sense of pride and ego) to emerge in it.

This activity resulted in the formation of the primary cosmic egg which had certain Gunas (inherent qualities, attributes, virtues and characteristics) that would determine the specific nature, temperament and personality traits of the creature that would finally emerge from this egg when it hatched. [There are three Gunas such as the Sata, Raja and Tama. They are like the chemical ingredients in any fluid that determine its fundamental qualities and characteristics. These Gunas would ultimately determine the underlying subtle and basic nature, the basic temperament and character traits of the offspring, i.e. the creature, which would emerge when the egg hatched finally upon maturity.]

Besides the above, the yolk of the egg had as its basic constituent ingredients the five primary elements called ‘Panch Maha Bhuts’ (which are sky, air, fire, water and earth). These elements determined the basic texture of this yolk that would determine the form which the offspring (creature) would get when the egg finally hatched (10).”

There is another relevant term known as PARAM TATTVA. What is it? The word ‘Param’ means supreme and one beyond which there is nothing. So the ‘Param Tattva’ is that metaphysical element beyond which nothing remains to be known. Obviously, it is the great spiritual Truth that is absolute and final, that beyond which nothing exists. This ‘Param Tattva’ is Brahm—the cosmic Consciousness and the Absolute Truth of creation. It is from this ‘Param Tattva’ that this creation has evolved in its myriad forms with astounding variations. In layman’s example we can say that this Param Tattva is like the atom that is fundamental to all things in this creation. If one wishes to know more than this Param Tattva would be like the nucleus that forms the core of the atom, and around which the entire creation revolves like the electrons inside an atom. Modern scientists would tell us that there are finer components of the nucleus itself—for instance, that the nucleus consists of protons and neutrons etc.

The idea here is basically that the most basic principle of creation, the element beyond which no further division or analysis is possible, beyond which nothing exists, and from which everything else came into being, is the ‘Param Tattva’ of the Upanishads.

What is it? The metaphysical term ‘Param Tattva’ and its spiritual spin-off known as the ‘Param Pada’ (the supreme state of existence of consciousness) have been elaborately described in the following Upanishads—Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 14; Canto 5, verse no. 76; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 43; Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, Brahman 5, section 1, verse no. 7-8; Paingal Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 27; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 11, 80-84, and Canto 5, verse no. 43; Tripadivibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph nos. 3-4; Canto 2, paragraph no. 11; Canto 4, paragraph no. 1; Canto 6, paragraph no. 8, 11; Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Uttar Kand/Canto 2, verse nos. 19-20.

The terms 'Param Tattva' and 'Param Pada' are closely related and almost synonymous with each other. While the term 'Param Tattva' is used in the field of metaphysical study, the term 'Param Pada' is related to its spiritual aspect. It is like the case of the word 'scientist' which applies to all men of science, but a scientist may have specialisation in a particular field which may be different from another genius of a different field. Similarly, a man can be called a 'medical doctor' only if he knows the 'science of medicine'. In other words, when a wise and enlightened man is aware of the Param Tattva he is deemed to have reached the Param Pada. Or conversely, a man who has attained the most exalted stature of spiritual enlightenment and has become highly realised in as much as he has become aware of and has experienced the existence of the essential Truth of existence known as the cosmic Super Consciousness that is the only eternal and universal entity in this 'living world', i.e. the man who has attained the 'Param Pada', is also deemed to have an expert knowledge of the Param Tattva. Both of them go hand in hand; one cannot be separated from the other.

The word 'Param' means supreme and transcendental; that beyond which nothing exists. The word 'Tattva' or 'Tattwa' means the essence, the soul, the real meaning of something, the fundamental basis of anything, the hidden truth and reality about any given entity, the secret of anything. The word 'Tattwa' means something that is fundamental to and at the very foundation of everything else; something that is basic and essential because without it all the rest of the things would lose their meaning and existence; something without which nothing else matters.

The word 'Pada' means a state of existence, a stature, an honour and title, a pedestal upon which any given entity stands and which gives it its value, importance and significance, a designation, a step, a mark, a post or sign, a rank, a category, an occupation.

Now therefore, the *Param Tattwa* is the supreme essence or the Absolute Truth of existence which is pure Consciousness. There is nothing beyond it to be known or accessed or realised.

The *Param Pada* is the supreme honour bestowed upon someone who has known the Param Tattva; it is the exalted and supreme stature that he acquires when he has accessed or known the Param Tattva; it is the ultimate citadel of spiritual endeavours and last destination of spiritual seekers.

In other words, when one has attained the supreme state of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation, when he has experienced the presence of the consciousness, when he has realised the falsehood of the external world and its equally false material objects and their charms, when he has realised that his 'self' is the pure conscious Atma or soul and not the body, when he has developed the eclectic view of Advaita or non-duality by seeing and experiencing the same Atma or consciousness everywhere in this creation and not only exclusively in some specified entity, when he has realised that true liberation and deliverance entails freedom from ignorance and delusions, and it does not mean to simply leave the body or forcibly tear one's self physically away from the world while mentally attached to it, and when he has developed so many other such sublime thoughts that naturally and automatically sprout in the bosom of a wise and enlightened man—i.e. when he has known the 'Tattva' that is 'Param', it is only then such a man is entitled to attain the 'Pada' that is 'Param'.

The *Param Pada* is the Absolute state of being, the Absolute state of existence. It is the supreme state of existence of consciousness which is regarded as being synonymous with the ultimate state in which anything can ever hope to exist, the state of perfection, truth and absoluteness. This Utopian state is the stature

occupied by the only non-dual Truth in existence which the Upanishad prefer to call 'Brahm Pada', the stature of the truthful transcendental Supreme Being known as Brahm, the cosmic Truth and Consciousness.

It is a stature in which a creature reaches the supreme Lord and merges his own individual Atma with the Atma of the Supreme Being. The word 'Param' means the most exalted, supreme, greatest and the ultimate, while 'Pada' means feet, state, stature, honour, title etc. That is, the creature is honoured with the highest title obtainable in this creation in the form of salvation and emancipation of his soul. It also refers to achieving the goal of being near to his Lord. Param Pada is equivalent to spiritual utopia.

This destination is the supreme state which a spiritual aspirant aspires to achieve. It is not any physical place known as 'heaven' as such, but it is a symbolic destination whereby the soul of the individual creature reaches the citadel of spiritualism where the soul becomes one with its primary source, the supreme cosmic Soul, by merging with it. This is its final destination, and is called emancipation and salvation. The devotee reaches the destination which he aspires for. For example, devotees of Vishnu find an abode where that Lord resides, and that abode is called Vaikunth. Those who worship Viraat Purush reach Brahma Loka. Those who worship Brahm also reach Brahma Loka, but this abode is a symbolic heaven, for the worshippers of Brahm, there is no return to this mundane world as they would have merged their souls with the cosmic Soul known as Brahm.

In the realm of Upanishadic philosophy, this *Param Pada* refers to the ultimate citadel of spiritual achievement that any aspirant strives for. This is the culmination of his spiritual quest and the end of his spiritual journey. Briefly, when he has reached this state of existence, he is deemed to have removed and eliminated all distinctions and artificial demarcations that are supposed to exist for an ordinary creature between the 'self' and the supreme Brahm. He has merged his Atma, which is his pure and truthful 'self', with the cosmic Truth known as Brahm. He has realised that 'consciousness and truth' are always and indisputably 'one' and non-dual, and therefore there cannot be any distinction between himself and Brahm. Since the entire existence has its origin in this Brahm, and since his own 'self' is Brahm personified, it follows that there is no distinction between his own self and the rest of the creatures in this creation. This mystical, eclectic and divine realisation of the ultimate paramount spiritual truth of existence removes all causes of consternations, perplexities and vexations in him that confound all the creatures in this world. Such an enlightened and truly realised person becomes calm, quiet, peaceful, tranquil and serene, for he has found the elixir of eternal beatitude and felicity which leaves nothing more to be sought. That is, he has reached the citadel of spiritual realisation which makes him liberated and delivered from the fetters of ignorance-based delusions that shackle all his other brethren to this world of artificiality and perpetual restlessness. All creatures strive to reach some 'Pada' or acquire some good designation, honour, fame and name for themselves, and this 'Param Pada' is the highest of any designations and honours that is attainable by a creature because it provides him with eternal happiness and peace.

A truly wise person is one who is not swept off his feet by external appearances but understands the reality behind each instance coming his way and then determines how to deal with it. In the realm of spiritualism and metaphysics, a wise and enlightenment man would be he who understands the truth that whatever is seen or unseen are all revelation of one supreme source of existence known as Brahm. This Brahm is the origin of all that exists so much so that each unit of this creation, from

the minutest to the most colossal, is a manifestation of this single entity. For instance, gold can be moulded into innumerable variety of ornaments, but a truly wise man would see the universal presence of gold in all of them and determine their value on the fact of how much gold each unit contains rather than its outer look. The external look and design of a golden ornament can be very misleading; it can be changed and the ornament given a completely new look if it is melted down and re-moulded. What does not change in it is of course the 'gold' content. Moreover, suppose the same design and shape is moulded from some other metal such as iron or copper or even brass having almost the same external glaze and shine as gold, would the buyer pay the same price for them? Definitely not, simply because there is no 'gold' in it!

Likewise, a wise and enlightened man realises that everything he sees in this world is essentially one Brahm revealed in all these forms—and nothing else. The world has any value only because there is conscious life in it, and this life is intelligent life. So, when a wise man sees and interacts with the world, he is actually seeing and interacting with the supreme Lord of creation who is sought to be worshipped by fools and ignorant people alike by doing elaborate religious rituals, fire sacrifices, repeating of endless Mantras, going on pilgrimages, doing so many exclusive auspicious deeds such as making charity, giving alms and donations, visiting shrines and serving holy men etc. when they forget in the whole exercise that they need not indulge in separate enterprises to please and worship the Lord when the latter can be very easily and conveniently served in the routine course of daily life by merely fine-tuning one's view of the world and the self—which is to see the Lord in every single unit of creation as well as inside his own self as the pure conscious Atma. With this world-view, each single deed and action would be an offering as well as service to the all-knowing, omniscient, omnipresent and all-pervading Lord, and no special efforts are needed to be made separately to please and worship him. This is the holistic view of Brahm and his worship. This highly evolved state of the mind and intellect is called reaching the 'Param Pada'. This exalted stature is not somewhere in the sky or in a castle somewhere, but is here and now in our midst. What are needed are the vision and the sight to see this Param Pada, the exalted and divine abode where the supreme transcendental Lord dwells. Going by the timeless adage that one can reach one's target only when he sets his sight on it, a man who sets his sight on this Param Pada is the one who would ultimately reach it.

The view that this world is separate from the Supreme Being known as Brahm, that the other living being is distinct from my own 'true self', and that Brahm is to be worshipped as a holy and divine Being detached from this existence and 'me' is out of ignorance and delusions created by misconceptions about the 'truth'. Once one overcomes this ignorance, all delusions vanish, and the light of Truth and Reality shines through.

Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 6, verse no. 43 says that the person who has realised the truth about Brahm has reached the Param Pada. To quote—"Brahm is nothing but 'Chaitanya' (pure consciousness), and as such it is also 'me or I' (i.e. the spiritual aspirant who has become self-realised and treats his 'self' as the conscious Atma which is this cosmic Spirit residing in his gross body). This Brahm has been visualised to have the name of 'Omkar' (symbolised by the word OM), the ethereal cosmic sound that envelops the entire cosmos which is soaked in its energy. [This all-inclusive and all-incorporating Brahm is the ethereal cosmic Spirit called by the name of Omkar.]

Brahm being all-pervading and all-encompassing in this world, Brahm being the cosmic consciousness that pulsates throughout this creation, and Brahm being revealed as this Atma, it is indeed an irrefutable and unequivocal fact that I too am Brahm personified. Not only that, this entire world is also my manifestation¹.

Indeed, this realisation has made it possible for me to achieve that stature of existence which is called 'Param Pada', the state of highest self and Brahm realisation. (43).

[Note—¹This is a logical conclusion of what has been said here. First, the entire world has its value and worth because of it having consciousness in it, for who would like to deal with a lifeless and inane creature which has no conscious factor in its body. This 'consciousness' is universal and uniform, and it exists in the form of the Atma that lives in the body of all living beings just like the atom which is at the core of all existing things in this world. These things have uncountable external features and characteristic qualities, but fundamentally they are manifestations of the numerous magical properties of this atom. Likewise, the same entity known as the Atma lives in all the creatures in this creation without exception, including the person who is making this declaration as mentioned in this verse. Therefore, it is indeed true when it is proclaimed that 'I am the world; this entire world is my manifestation'. Here the word 'my' comes out of the mouth of a wise, enlightened, self-realised and Brahm-realised person, and not from a deceitful imposter and cunning fraudster who is proud of himself that he has conquered the world and it therefore belongs to him; it is his.]

Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Brahman 5, section 1, verse no. 6 describes Param Pada in the following words—"When the Mana (mind) fixes its attention on something that gives it eternal peace and bliss, which is equivalent to being in the abode of Lord Vishnu (verse no. 5), it tends (prefers) to remain there permanently and gradually becomes indistinguishable and inseparable from it. [In other words, once the Mana withdraws itself from the rocky world that is so transient and uncertain, and instead fixes itself in pure consciousness which is steady and unfaltering as well as the only eternal spiritual truth, it finds permanent tranquility and peace. After all, the reason for it getting involved in the world in the first place was for search of happiness and peace, but in the bargain what it got was something that was not only temporary but also entrapping and deluding. What more would the Mana want if it can find something that can give it eternal peace and happiness, something that can bestow everlasting tranquility and bliss to it? By remaining submerged in the thoughts of the consciousness which is the ultimate essence and spiritual truth in creation, and hence called the 'Param Tattva', the mind gets peace, tranquility, happiness, bliss and contentedness that are steady, imperishable, infinite and eternal. So once the Mana finds permanent peace and bliss, it would naturally stick to this state of existence; it would obviously not like to go back to the world where everything is transient and illusive; it would not like to bargain eternity with transience. Once it chooses to remain permanently in the company of pure consciousness, it would be a de-facto permanent resident of this place and acquire a new identity, new habits and characteristics which are in sync with its new habitat that would distinguish it from its earlier identity as the mind tainted by worldly delusions and ignorance. It would have assumed a completely new personality that would be different from the one it had while residing or remaining engrossed in the world. It would be called a mind that is inseparable and indistinguishable from the abode of

Lord Vishnu—a metaphoric way of saying that the mind had find the ultimate objective of its quest for happiness and peace.]

The steady and unfaltering state of existence of the mind brings it in direct contact with the grand truth of existence—the truth that is non-dual or Advaita, the truth which has no second, no equal or no parallel. This non-dual state implies that there is only one truthful entity in existence, that there is only one consciousness, and that there is only one supreme Lord. It removes all dichotomy, all notions of duality and fractured view of creation. This supreme and exalted state of mental existence where there is no transience and no more confusion about what is true and what is not, the state of existence marked by profound mental stability and quietude is known as the ‘Param Pada’.

The eclectic realisation of the existence of the pure consciousness as one’s ‘true self’, to be firm and steady in this conviction is tantamount to having achieved the exalted stature of Param Pada. This is the supreme state of existence; it is the highest citadel of spiritual achievement that an aspirant can aspire for. [And this citadel is akin to reaching or having access to the abode of Lord Vishnu, the supreme Lord.] (6)

[Note--The world is sometimes pleasant and at other times it appears to be tormenting. Any one given thing is pleasant for one and unpleasant for another. There is the day and the night; there is sorrow and joy; there is birth and death; there is health and sickness; there is ignorance and wisdom; there are many sanctioned paths to attain emancipation and salvation; there is you and me; there is good and bad, etc. In other words, there is a sense of ‘duality’ which never gives permanent peace and bliss for which the creature yearns. But once the mind decides to shut off this world of delusions, then it lives in only one world of spiritual bliss, and it comes from self-realisation, i.e. from realising the true nature of the pure uncorrupt ‘self’ as the conscious Atma which has nothing to do with either with the world or its delusions. This is the supreme Tattwa or essence that is achieved by the mind that has withdrawn it self from the confusing and deluding world of duality.]”

Paingalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 4, verse no. 27 describes Param Pada as follows—“When a person becomes dispassionate and detached from anything pertaining to this materialistic world and remains indifferent to them, it is only then that he can attain the supreme, transcendental state of realisation called the ‘Param Pada’, or literally the stature which is the most exalted and the pinnacle of spiritual attainment. When such a state is achieved, then wherever the Mana (mind and heart) goes, wherever the mind fixes its self and the heart finds peace for its self, that place is the Param Pada for the person. [That is, during such a state of existence, wherever the man stays, in whichever state he lives, whatever he thinks, anything he does—all become equivalent to being in a state of eternal peace and bliss. None of them cause any restlessness in a self-realised person’s mind and heart; he always remains unruffled and unaffected; he treats everything and every circumstance with equanimity and equality.]”

Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 2, verse no. 14 describes Param Pada as follows—“A person who has developed the inner sight of wisdom and enlightenment which enables him to carefully weigh, finely scrutinize, intelligently analyse and then convincingly determine the real truth about everything visible in the form of this world based on the knowledge and benchmarks set for such purpose by

Vedanta (Upanishads) is able to have a deep insight and peer behind the external façade of this visible world to see the subtle existence of the 'Param Pada' in it.

Such wise, erudite, sagacious and enlightened persons find liberation and deliverance from the fetters caused by ignorance and delusions pertaining to the reality of existence, and consequentially they are able to free themselves from such shackles and finally obtain emancipation and salvation for themselves (i.e. their souls). [A truly wise person is one who is not swept off his feet by external appearances but understands the reality behind each instance coming his way and then determines how to deal with it. In the realm of spiritualism and metaphysics, a wise and enlightenment man would be he who understands the truth that whatever is seen or unseen are all revelation of one supreme source known as Brahm. This Brahm is the origin of all that exists so much so that each unit of this creation, from the minutest to the most colossus, is a manifestation of this single entity. For instance, gold can be moulded into innumerable variety of ornaments, but a truly wise man would see the universal presence of gold in all of them and determine their value on the fact of how much gold each unit contains rather than its outer look. The external look and design can be changed if the golden ornament is melted and re-moulded; what does not change is the 'gold' in it. Likewise, a wise and enlightened man realises that everything he sees in this world is essentially one Brahm in all these forms—and nothing else. So, when he sees and interacts with the world, he is actually seeing and interacting with the supreme Lord of creation who is sought to be worshipped by fools and ignorant people by doing elaborate rituals, fire sacrifices, repeating of endless Mantras, going on pilgrims, doing so many exclusive deeds such as charity, giving of alms and donations, visiting shrines and serving holy men etc. when they forget in the whole exercise that they need not indulge in separate enterprises to please and worship the Lord when he can be very easily and conveniently served in the routine course of daily life. This is the holistic view of Brahm as being all-pervading and all-including in this creation. This highly evolved state of the mind and intellect is called reaching the Param Pada. This exalted stature is not somewhere in the sky or in a castle somewhere, but is here and now in our midst. What are needed are the vision and the sight to see it. Illusion that this world is separate from the Supreme Being known as Brahm, that the other living being is distinct from my own 'true self', and that Brahm is to be worshipped as a holy and divine Being detached from this existence and me is out of ignorance and delusions created by it. Once one overcomes this ignorance, all delusions vanish, and the light of Truth and Reality shines through.] (14).

The Atharva Veda's *Annapurna Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse nos. 10-11, and Canto 5, verse no. 43 describe the Param Tattwa and the Param Pada as follows—

“Canto 4, verse no. 10 = Those who are ignorant and deluded imagine that the *Param Tattva* (the supreme essence or Truth of existence; the pure consciousness) can be accessed by attaining the various Siddhis (mystical powers) just like an ignorant man imagines that there is a snake in a length of lifeless rope. This leads them to get entangled in the web created by the numerous doctrines and philosophies as well as uncountable paths and their tempting rewards.

[In other words, if a man thinks that he would attain the highest state of spiritual enlightenment that would make him privy to the truth of the pure consciousness and thereby attain liberation and deliverance, or enjoy exemplary blissfulness and beatitude that accompanies such enlightenment by obtaining Siddhis or by following the various paths and numerous doctrines, then such a man is virtually

seeking water in a mirage seen in the hot desert. In the example cited in this verse, he thinks that the lifeless length of rope is a snake and thereby gets terrified at its sight, raises a hue and cry, and ultimately proves himself to be a laughing stock, and gets humiliated at his stupidity.]

Therefore, a wise and erudite man is one who does not allow himself to be entangled in any kind of fallacious thinking that act like a web that would trap him instead of bestowing liberation and deliverance to him (10).

“Canto 4, verse no. 11 = Those who are wise and erudite enough to concentrate their attention and efforts upon their main aim in life—which is to attain the *Param Tattva* or the *Param Pada*, the supreme stature of spiritual liberation when one becomes self-realised and gets acquainted with the pure Consciousness and the absolute Truth of creation as well as of their own ‘self’—remain focused on it, and they do not allow themselves to be deflected from this path, to be distracted in any manner, and get sucked in the vortex of confusions and never-ending bewilderments. They become indifferent to everything else; they renounce everything else; they pay no attention to anything else; they have nothing to do with anything other than the realisation of the *Param Tattva* as well as the *Param Pada*.

Such attained and self-realised aspirants are able to break free from the knots (‘*Granthis*’) symbolizing numerous delusions and confusions (about what is the truth and what is not) that has tied them down. Being thus freed, they live a life like a man who has been freed from all bondages.

[Here, ‘breaking free from bondages’ refers to the situations when one has overcome all traces of ignorance and delusions about the ‘spiritual truth of existence’ or the ‘*Tattva*’. A man who is under the influences of delusions and ignorance tries to search this ‘truth’ everywhere else except the place where it should actually be searched. In other words, he tries to find the pure consciousness and its glories by following numerous tenets and philosophies, or by undertaking various difficult practices cited in verse no. 9 above. He also believes that by obtaining different *Siddhis* he would be able to access the consciousness and attain the supreme state of existence. Such a man is no better than a slave because he spends his entire life bonded to delusions and ignorance, and is deemed to be tied in ‘*Granthis*’ or knots. He is like a bullock that is yoked to a bullock-cart without ever finding rest and freedom to roam about at will.

The ‘knot’ of delusions and ignorance is broken only when true wisdom, erudition and enlightenment dawns upon the mental horizon of the aspirant. It is in their light that he sees the ‘truth’ and overcomes the darkness of ignorance that creates so many delusions. When he is acquainted with the *Tattva* or the principal truth about this creation, about his own self, about the rest of the world, it is then that he is deemed to have broken free from the shackles of ignorance and its attending delusions.] (11).”

“Canto 5, verse no. 43 = Control of the *Pran* wind enables the creature to obtain the exalted stature of transcendental existence called the ‘*Param Pada*’—literally, the supreme state of existence. This is because when the *Pran* is controlled along with making the *Chitta* defunct, the creature becomes peaceful and steady; he is able to concentrate his attention and energy on higher goals of life and pursue his spiritual aims. He is not disturbed by numerous temptations that arise out of the various *Vasanas* when the *Chitta* and *Pran* are active.”

The Atharva Veda's *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Uttar Kanda/Canto 2, verse nos. 19-20 says that there is only one Tattwa in creation, and it is the Absolute Truth. This Tattwa is like the 'light' that illuminates the entire creation by eliminating the darkness representing spiritual delusions and ignorance. To quote—"From the basic or fundamental perspective of the Absolute Truth of creation, such debates are useless and a waste of time and energy. Actually, it is one Truth that is the fundamental Tattwa (essence, basis) of everything in existence.

[Here, 'Truth' refers to the Consciousness that pervades in this creation uniformly, and without which nothing would matter or exist. If there was no Consciousness, there would have been no life on Earth, and the world (earth) would be as barren a stretch of terrain as that on the planets Mars or Venus for instance!]

Whatever is visible in this physical world also appears to be 'true' because it is perceived first hand, but this 'truth' is cloaked in Maya as the instruments of the body which perceive it are themselves veiled in Maya. [Refer verse no. 9-18.]

Therefore, there is a sea of difference between the 'Truth' that is 'absolute', and the 'truth' that is 'not absolute' but is rather deluding.

The 'Absolute Truth' is a manifestation of or a metaphor for 'light' because it is self-evident and self-illuminated.

[It is different from the perceived or imagined 'truth' in the form of the world which is illuminated by the light of something else, for instance the light of the Sun. The Sun is self-illuminated and self-sustaining; it does not require anything else to make it shine and give light, or remain burning eternally. On the other hand the world is neither self-illuminated nor self-sustaining—i.e. it is not self-illuminated as it depends upon the light of the Sun to remain illuminated, and it is not self-sustaining as it depends upon the Sun for its heat, light and energy, factors that are absolute essentials for creation to survive.

Similarly, the Atma is self-illuminated and self-sustaining, whereas the body is dependent upon this Atma for its awareness of the world ('illumination') as well as its life ('sustenance')]

But, at the same time, the fact is that it is the 'light' that makes the Truth shine, whether at the cosmic level of the 'absolute' or the mundane level of the world which the creature sees with his organs of perception. This 'light' is the 'Consciousness' known as Brahm at the cosmic level, and the Atma at the individual level of the creature.

Hence, the 'light' (of knowledge) is a common denominator at all levels of existence that illuminates the Truth. That is, it is knowledge, wisdom and erudition that highlight the 'truth' by eliminating darkness in the form of ignorance of this 'truth' resulting in delusions arising out of misinterpretation, misconception, misperception, misinformation etc.

This 'light' representing the glorious virtue of knowledge, erudition, wisdom, enlightenment and sagacity that are the unique characteristics of the supreme Consciousness known as Brahm at the micro plane of existence, and as the Atma at the individual level of the creature's existence is therefore a non-dual or Advaita virtue. It is uniform and universal in creation (because the virtues of knowledge and wisdom that stand for 'truth', instead of the ever-changing nature of 'un-truth', always remain steady, unchanging and one—or 'non-dual')

[If we regard the word 'light' as a metaphor for the enlightened Atma, then also the same logic applies, as the 'truthful Atma' is a universal, immutable, immanent and constant factor of creation, an unchallengeable factor without which this creation would lose its meaning and foundation.] (19-20)."

This having been said and done, we shall now read about the many forms that the fundamental Truth, the ultimate Element known as the ‘Param Tattva’, took in order to set the ball of creation rolling. Had there been no change in the form of the Param Tattva, this creation with its stupendous diversity and astounding variations would just not have been possible.

The Upanishads enumerate a number of TATTVAS, the ‘Basic Elements of Creation’, and we will read about them one by one now.

The 4 TATTVAS—The *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 5, verse no. 5 mentions *four Tattwas* which are honoured during the formal process of worshipping of Lord Ram using his Pooja Yantra, called the Bhupur Yantra of Lord Ram. These four Tattwas are the following—(i) Maya Tattwa, i.e. the basic elements that characterize and define Maya, or the numerous delusions, misconceptions and entanglements that exist in this creation and are fostered by ignorance; (ii) Vidya Tattwa, i.e. the fundamental principles, basic doctrines and essential virtues of wisdom, knowledge, erudition, sagacity, learning and enlightenment etc. that can help one to overcome Maya and Agyan; (iii) Kalaa Tattwa, i.e. the essential qualities in all the living beings that determine their individual personality and character; also meaning the various art, skill, craft etc. that exist in creation, as well as the basic fact that the world is ever-changing and no two things or instances are alike; and (iv) Par Tattwa, i.e. the supreme, absolute, essential, constant and universal Truth and Reality that refers to Brahm, the universal Consciousness.

According to this Upanishad, these four Tattwas are worshipped as follows—“the following eight divine entities are worshipped in their personified form in a symbolic manner on the eight petals of the central 8-petalled lotus of the Bhupur Yantra.

First, the petals on the four angles or corners and their relevant deities are worshipped and honoured, followed by those in the four cardinal points or directions. The worshipping is done in a clockwise manner, starting first with the petals that point to the four corners or angles, followed by those petals that point to the four directions.

Thus, we have the following course of worship—

(A) Worship of the lotus petals in the four corners—(i) Atma or soul which is pure consciousness and the true ‘self’ of the worshipper is honoured and worshipped on the lotus petal pointing towards the south-east corner; (ii) Antar-atma or the worshipper’s inner-self and his sub-conscious is honoured and worshipped on the lotus petal pointing towards the south-west corner; (iii) Parmatma or the supreme Soul of creation, also known as Supreme Being, is honoured and worshipped on the lotus petal pointing towards the north-west corner; and (iv) Gyan-Atma or that aspect of the supreme Consciousness that is eternally wise and enlightened, which never comes under the influence of delusions and ignorance, honoured and worshipped on the lotus petal pointing towards the north-east corner¹.

(B) Worship of the lotus petals in the four directions—(i) The *Maya-tattwa* is honoured and worshipped on the lotus petal pointing towards the eastern direction; (ii) the *Vidya-tattwa* is honoured and worshipped on the lotus petal pointing towards the southern direction; (iii) the *Kalaa-tattwa* is honoured and worshipped on the lotus

petal pointing towards the western direction; and (iv) the *Para-tattwa* is honoured and worshipped on the lotus petal pointing towards the northern direction² (5).

[Note—¹Their respective Mantras are—(i) ‘OM Atamane Namaha’ meaning ‘OM Salutations to the Atma before which I bow most reverentially’, (ii) ‘OM Antaraatmane Namaha’ meaning ‘OM Salutations to the Antar-atma before which I bow most reverentially’, (iii) ‘OM Parmaatmane Namaha’ meaning ‘OM Salutations to the Parmatma before whom I bow most reverentially’, and (iv) ‘OM Gyaanaatmaane Namaha’ meaning ‘OM Salutations to the Atma which is an embodiment of the virtues of Gyan—i.e. which is wise, enlightened, knowledgeable and learned. I bow most reverentially before it’.

²Their respective Mantras are—(i) ‘OM Maya-tattwa Namaha’ meaning ‘OM Salutations! I bow before the fundamental delusions called Maya (that is created by Brahm)’; (ii) ‘OM Vidya-tattwa Namaha’ meaning ‘OM Salutations! I bow before the grand virtues of wisdom, knowledge and enlightenment which are collectively called Vidya’; (iii) ‘OM Kalaa-tattwa Namaha’ meaning ‘OM Salutations! I bow before the various skills, arts and crafts that exist in creation as well as the magical nature of this creation to change every moment’; and (iv) ‘OM Par-tattwaaye Namaha’ meaning ‘OM Salutations! I bow before the supreme Tattwa or the great Principal and Authority of creation (which is the supreme transcendental Brahm)’. It is called ‘Para Tattwa’ as it transcends all known definitions and criterions, and is beyond comprehension and grasp of knowledge; it is the epicenter and progenitor of all essential Tattwas in creation.

As is the case with all the entities to which worship is being offered in this Yantra, the above eight are also honoured in a symbolic manner.]

The 5 TATTVAS—The five basic elements or Tattvas are the following—the sky, air or wind, fire or energy, water and earth in increasing order of density or grossness. Refer *Sharrirako-panishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 1-3.

Generally speaking, the primary elements that constitute the building blocks of creation are called the ‘Panch Maha Bhuts’ or the *five basic elements*. They are sky/space, air/wind, fire/energy, water and earth in ascending order of grossness. These principal forces of Nature are responsible for coming into being, sustenance, development and conclusion of the entire creation as we know it. Their personified forms are imagined to be in the form of their *patron Gods* who actually control these elements and their functions in creation. These Gods have been described in *Yogchudamani Upanishad*, verse no. 72 of Sam Veda tradition, *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 8 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, and *Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse nos. 83-102 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

The *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, verse nos. 176-178, and Canto 5, verse nos. 13-15 describe the *patron Gods*, *shape* and *colour* of these five elements.

How to do *meditation* by contemplating upon these five elements have been described in *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 5, verse nos. 49-51.

According to *Paingalo-panishad*, Canto 2, and *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 1 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there are five basic or primary elements in creation, and the rest of the creation has evolved from them.

How the *five basic elements were used to create this world* has been described in Shukla Yajur Veda tradition's *Paingalo-panishad*, in its Canto 2, verse no. 2-8; and *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 1, and Canto 2, verse no. 1-12.

The *location* of these five elements in the body of the creature have been described in *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 5, and Canto 2, verse no. 135-141; *Paingalo-panishad*, in its Canto 2, verse no. 2-8.

The *functions* of these five elements as well as the creation of the five sense perceptions, called the *Tanmatras* (perceptions of sight, smell, sound, taste and touch), have been described in *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 6; and *Paingalo-panishad*, in its Canto 2, verse no. 2-4.

The *location, colours and Beej Mantras* of the five elements have been described in *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 85-102. It goes on to describe how meditation is to be done on these five elements.

How the body of the creature is formed by the five elements have been described in *Shaarirako Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 1.

The *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 69 elucidates the fact that Yoga brings about a *union between the various elements or Dhaatus of the body*.

The *activities and pyramidal structure* of the five elements have been described in *Shaarirako Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 6.

During formal forms of ritualistic worship, such as when worshipping a Pooja Yantra or worship instrument dedicated to some deity (such as the one dedicated to Lord Ram as described in the Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Cantos 4-5), or doing fire sacrifices, it is necessary to perform *Bhut Shuddhi* or purification of the elements.

The process of Bhut Shuddhi is of paramount importance during worship rituals. Now let us see what it means in metaphysical terms. It is referred to in the *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 5, verse no. 1.

The *Bhut Shuddhi* is the formal purification of the five Bhuts (the fundamental elements in creation). It essentially consists of imagining that the body consists of the five basic elements, viz. earth, water, fire/energy, air/wind, and space/sky, and then first merging them all, one by one, into one single entity, and finally into super consciousness which is synonymous with the supreme transcendental Brahman. This process purifies the body as it does away with its grossness and transforms it into an entity that assumes subtlety associated with the pure consciousness.

The process is as follows—(a) Imagine that the body from the toe to the knees consist of the 'earth element', is square in shape, has the mark of the Vajra (goad), and is yellow in colour. It is marked by the seed/root syllable or Beej Mantra 'lum/n(g)' (ल + ँ). (b) The part of the body from the knees to the navel consist of the 'water' element, is shaped like a crescent moon, has the mark of the lotus, and is white coloured. It is marked by the seed/root syllable or Beej Mantra 'wum/n(g)' (व + ँ). (c) The part of the body from the navel till the throat (Adam's apple) consists of the 'fire' element which is triangular in shape, has the sign of 'Swastika' (Ó), and is red coloured. It is marked by the seed/root syllable or Beej Mantra 'rum/n(g)' (र + ँ). (d) The part of the body from the throat till the root of the nose and the middle of the eyebrows consists of the 'wind' element, is hexagonal in shape, dark in colour, and has 6 dots outlining the six points of the hexagon. It is marked by the seed/root syllable or Beej Mantra 'yum/n(g)' (य + ँ). (e) The part of the body from the root of

the nose to the centre of the skull is the 'space/sky' element, is circular in shape, its colour is grey like smoke/fog, and it is marked by a flag/standard. The seed/root syllable or Beej Mantra 'hum/n(g)' (ह्र + ं) is marked in it.

All these five elements should be merged with one another in a sequential form, beginning from the earth at the bottom of the body and going right up to the cranium where the sky element is located. In other words, the earth is made to submerge its self into the water element, the water into the fire element, the fire into the wind element, the wind into the sky or space element, and finally the sky/space element is freed from its confinement inside the skull to assume its original form as the vast, infinite, measureless and endless cosmos called the Prakriti or Nature in its macrocosmic dimensions. This Nature is without any specific attributes and is all-pervading and all-encompassing.

This Prakriti is also known as Maya which is the delusion-creating powers of Brahm, the supreme Consciousness. So, in the final step of purification, it is obligatory to remove this Maya altogether as it is the primary cause of the erroneous notion that the pure consciousness that is the true 'self of all living beings is the gross body consisting of elements of varying degrees of grossness, and that this body lives in a world which also consists of elements in varying degrees of grossness. Therefore, truthful cleansing would be a thorough rinsing of the inner-self so that all forms of delusions and misconception are removed.

When both the Maya (delusions and their attendant misconceptions and hallucinations) and the Prakriti (a person's natural habits, inclinations and temperaments) are eliminated, the worshipper is freed from all of their tainting affects. This results in his ability to relate himself with his truthful and immaculate form as the 'pure consciousness' rather than the gross body as well as the gross world consisting of the five elements in their varying degrees of grossness. In other words, the 'self' of the individual merges with the 'cosmic Self' or the cosmic Consciousness of creation known as Brahm. This is complete cleansing of the worshipper as it is only possible when all Maya and its negative affects are done away with. Mere physical washing of the gross body by taking ritualistic baths in rivers that are visibly polluted or by any other means can never truly clean the soul sufficiently enough so that it is prepared to receive the guest-of-honour in the form of Brahm, the Supreme Being!

In this way, the seeker/aspirant/worshipper should meditate for some time and imagine that he has merged himself, i.e. his Atma or soul, with the supreme Soul called the Parmatma so as to become inseparable from the latter. This Parmatma is no one but the cosmic Consciousness known as the supreme Brahm.

Then, after recovering from deep concentration and meditative trance, he should imagine that his body is being recreated from that supreme Brahm by following the reverse sequence of events. This newly created body will have been purged in a symbolic way of all the sins and faults which were present in the worshipper's earlier body. Theoretically, it is like taking a new birth with a detoxified and purified body. The worshipper becomes a different person from his earlier self, and he then becomes eligible to worship Lord Ram using the divine Ram Yantra. The reverse sequence of events is as follows—the supreme soul—the world/Maya—space/sky—wind/fire—water—earth. Hence, the body has been purged and catheterized of all earlier impurities, and has now become worthy to worship the Lord who is immaculate, holy and divine.

The all-pervading, omniscient, omnipotent, attributeless, almighty, all-encompassing and auspicious supreme Soul is present as the seeker's or worshipper's Atma in his own body. This process is deemed to be the best way for the symbolic

purification of body that is needed to offer worship to the Supreme Being who cannot be approached with a polluted and dirty self.

The importance to thoroughly cleanse oneself before approaching the Lord is simple to understand even in the modern context—can anyone ever imagine that he would present himself in the royal court of a king, or in the front of the president of a sovereign country while he is dirty, stinking, shabbily dressed and in a general unkempt condition?

Now we shall quote the selected Upanishads cited above vis-à-vis the five elements.

The *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, verse nos. 176-178, and Canto 5, verse nos. 13-15 describe the *patron Gods, shape* and *colour* of these five elements. Now let us see what these verses have to say—

“*Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 176 = The Chaturastra Chakra is located at the site where the earth (representing the living creation and the visible world) has its beginning, and its patron deity is Lord Brahma, the creator¹.

After that is the Chakra shaped like a crescent moon, called the Ardha Chandrakar Chakra. Its patron deity is Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation. This Chakra is situated on the water element² (176).

[Note--¹That is, this Chakra has four corners and it represents the earth which acts as the base for all living world as is known to us. The four corners are the four directions into which the earth is hypothetically divided for the purpose of study and helping the creature to decide his location. They are south, west, north and east.

²In other words, the water element is symbolically shaped like a shallow convex bowl or tray because the water assumes the shape of the vessel in which it is kept and it cannot be held in a completely flat surface. So the vessel that can hold water must be slightly curved like the crescent moon.

The Dhyan Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 27-28 describe the subtle heart shaped like a divine Lotus as a Peeth where the supreme Lord known as Vishnu is honorably seated.]

“*Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 177 = The Agni Chakra representing the fire element is triangular in shape and its patron deity is Lord Rudra (Shiva), the concluder of creation¹.

The Vayu Chakra representing the wind or air element is shaped like a hexagon and its patron deity is Ishwar, the Supreme Being² (177).

[Note--¹The colour of fire is red or orange, and the sign depicting danger is a triangle. That is why road signs depicting danger are triangular in outline. Fire is the most dangerous of the natural elements; hence it is represented by the triangle.

²The severe cyclonic storms appearing during the rainy season are observed to move in rapid circular motions, changing directions unpredictably and frequently. The tornadoes or twisters and hot whirlwinds during summers also move in rapid circles that sweep across the land and change course unpredictably. This natural tendency of the wind to move in circles and change direction at will is represented by depiction of its basic shape as a hexagon—which is an-almost circular shape but having corners and straight lines to indicate that the wind has the inborn characteristic of moving in a particular direction for some time and then suddenly changing course and taking another direction. This is the reason why one feels the wind blowing sharply against one's face if one stands in the 'corner' of a large hallway. The movement of the air is more marked at sharp bends as compared to smooth turns.]

“*Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 178 = The Akash Chakra representing the sky or space element is shaped like a circle and its patron deity is Sada-Shiva (the eternal truthful Brahm)¹ (178).

[Note--¹The best shape that the forces of Nature allow in order to retain everything within the outer boundary of existence is a rounded ball, a sphere. Since the sky encloses everything in existence and prevents them from scattering about and getting lost in the wilderness of creation, it must have a spherical shape. This is the basic principle of physics that when any thing moves around any central attracting entity such as the planets moving around the sun, the path that they take is circular because of the natural gravitational pull of the sun. The circular shape is the ideal shape that allows everything to be under the control of one central controlling authority and preventing them from scattering around, dashing against each other chaotically, or running amok and getting lost in a tangential manner. The natural forces of centripetal and centrifugal begin to play simultaneously to ensure a circular outline.

In the present case of the creation, the sky represents the supreme Brahm around which the rest of the creation revolves. So in metaphysics this Brahm is like the physical sun in the sky, the rest of the planetary system that goes around the sun in circles is like the rest of the creation that revolves around this Brahm. This is the macrocosmic picture, while the microcosmic counterpart would be the Atma around which the rest of the being of the creature revolves. Even the microscopic atom is shaped like a sphere or ball because the electrons must take this shape if they have to remain in their place orbiting around the central nucleus. The sky appears to be like an inverted hemisphere, but considering the fact that what we see is only the half part of it, it follows that when we complete the hemisphere it would be a circle.]

“*Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 13 = The realm of the earth has a symbolic four-cornered outline (shape). Its patron God is Brahma. The realm of the water has the symbolic shape of a crescent moon and its patron God is Lord Vishnu (13).

“*Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 14 = The realm of the fire element is triangular in shape, and its patron God is Lord Rudra (the angry form of Shiva).

The realm of the air or wind element has a hexagonal shape and its patron deity is Sankarshan¹ (14).

[Note—¹*Sankarshan* is the older brother of Lord Krishna, i.e. Balaram, according to the Purans. The word literally means ‘well drawn’. In his earlier incarnation, he was Laxman, the younger brother of Lord Ram. Laxman was an incarnation of Seshnath, the legendary hooded serpent on whom Lord Vishnu reclines on the surface of the cosmic ocean of milk known as Kshir Sagar. Hence, Sankarshan is Lord Seshnath who is supposed to support the earth on its hoods.]

“*Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 15 = The realm of the sky is rounded (and that is why we see the sky like an inverted hemisphere). Its patron deity is Sriman Narayan (Vishnu) (15).

How to do *meditation* by contemplating upon these five elements have been described in *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 5, verse nos. 49-51. Let us see what it has to say—

“*Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 49 = When his mind meditates about and experiences the presence of Amrit (the elixir of eternity and bliss) in the head, i.e. when the enlightened ascetic is able to experience the presence of the supreme transcendental source of eternal bliss and peace known as Brahm in the region of the Vyom Chakra and the Brahm Randhra Chakra by focusing the attention of his mind

and the energy of his vital winds called Pran there, he is able to vanquish thirst and hunger (for worldly things, sensual pleasures and material comforts) along with overcoming the bad affects of all (spiritual) poisons¹. [That is, by becoming Brahm-realised and experiencing its attendant spiritual ecstasy and bliss, the ascetic has nothing more to desire and wants nothing in this material world. The enjoyments and comforts of this material world are transient, artificial and inconsequential as compared to this spiritual high of ecstasy and bliss experienced by Brahm-realisation. He is deemed to have overcome all spiritual hurdles by way of overcoming the numerous faults and imperfections that create uncountable obstacles in his spiritual progress and reaching of the ultimate goal of emancipation and salvation.]

When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the earth element² and contemplating about it, he acquires the mystical powers that allow him to take his mind to any corner of the earth, even in beyond it to the nether world called Patal. [That is, this mystical power empowers him to transcend all physical and geographical barriers that usually impede the reach of an ordinary man, and his mind can go anywhere without any hindrance. He can think of everything that exists on this earth, and his mind can even visualise what is hidden inside the bowls of the earth and beyond it. While living on one part of the earth, he can know what is happening on its other side. This also would imply that nothing in this world would ever influence his mind and captivate it by trapping it in its charm and preventing it from breaking free from its shackles and proceeding ahead.] (49).

[Note—¹Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 57-60, 62-64.

²Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 85-87.]

“*Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 50 = When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the water element¹ and contemplating about it, he has nothing to fear from this element. [That is, he need not fear from any harm being caused to him from water in any form, such as drowning in it or suffering from any water borne disease or some internal medical problems arising out of water such as oedema of lungs, dropsy of tissues and other diseases due to misbalance in the water content of the body.]

Similarly, when his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the fire element² and contemplating about it, he has nothing to fear from this element. [That is, he cannot be burnt by fire; his body never has to suffer from lack of vital heat and energy; he never suffers from fever and other diseases due to misbalance in the fire element in Nature. Besides this, his speech acquires all the potent of this element because fire is said to be an integral part of the faculty of speech. He has proper eyesight because again the fire and its light are responsible for the faculty of sight to function properly. He has not to suffer from lack of hunger or digestive problems because the fire is responsible for the proper functioning of both.] (50).

[Note—¹Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 88-90 ½ .

²Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos.90-94.]

“*Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 51 = When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the air or wind element¹ and contemplating about it, he is deemed to have acquired the ability to move in the sky like birds. [That is, he becomes so light that he can float in the air.]

By fixing his mind in the exalted sky element², which is a metaphoric way of saying that by becoming as exalted and sublime as the supreme Brahm himself who

has an exalted abode as high as the sky, such a realised and acclaimed ascetic can acquire such mystical and eclectic powers as Anima etc.³ (51).

[Note—¹Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 95-97.

²Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 98-102.

³Anima is one of the eight mystical powers that are collectively called Siddhis.]

According to *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, there are five basic or primary elements in creation, and the rest of the creation has evolved from them. These are sky, air/water, fire/energy, water and earth. This entire Canto is dedicated to the elaboration of this philosophy.

How the *five basic elements were used to create this world* has been described in *Paingalo-panishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse no. 2 as follows—“The supreme creator or Lord called ‘Isha’ took fractions of the five primary elements (i.e. sky, air, water, fire and earth) that he had created first to create the gross bodies of the individual creature as well as the gross body of the entire creation¹. [In other words, the same ingredients were used by him to mould the individual creature’s body as well as the rest of the creation. This observation has a great import—although no two creatures are alike, and though the external form and shape and size and colour and contour of any two individual creatures might be different, but they are fundamentally the same. When it is extended to the rest of the creation, then the notion of non-duality, uniformity and universality in creation is easy to understand.]

The ‘earth’ element was used to create the skull, skin, intestines, bones, flesh and nails. From the ‘water’ element he created blood, urine, saliva and sweat etc. From the ‘fire’ element he produced hunger, thirst, heat, infatuations, passions, lust and sexual instincts etc. From the ‘wind or air’ element he crafted the virtue of ‘motion and activity’ such as walking, sitting, getting up, going places, breathing, speaking etc. And from the ‘sky’ element were produced such traits as Kaam (worldly desires, passions, yearnings etc.) and Krodh (anger, vehemence, wrathfulness, short temper, indignation etc.).

The gross body so produced from these fundamental primary elements naturally had all the traits that were inherently present as an integral part and defining attributes of these individual elements. Therefore, the body of the creature exhibited all the attributes and characteristics present in the ingredients used to make up its body. The body that the creature assumed further depended upon the cumulative effects of the deeds which the creature had done in the past². Since the body took a birth in as much it had ‘come into being’ and was ‘not eternal and without a birth’, it had to pass through various stages of change and development (i.e. evolution) such as childhood, etc., and had to suffer from their accompanying sufferings (2).

[Note—¹By saying that Brahm had created the five basic elements and subtly entered them to empower them with their characteristic qualities it is meant that these elements were bestowed with some fundamental qualities which were deemed most essential and necessary to conceive and implement, then develop, nourish and sustain, and finally close the process of creation as envisioned by Brahm. It was like a delegation of his majestic powers by Brahm, vesting these entities with those powers and necessary authority that were deemed absolutely essential to implement the Lord’s ideas of creation.

Thus, the ‘earth’ was given the virtue of fertility and providing nourishment, sustenance to the creation as well as to act as a base and foundation for all the

forthcoming creation; it was vested with a vast and inexhaustible reservoir of natural resources so as to provide the creation with the necessities of daily life in abundance. The 'water' was vested with the power of digesting and then equally distributing nourishment to all the parts of creation; of providing the vital sap and nectar for fostering life. The 'fire' element obviously was assigned the task of giving required energy, heat and light. The 'air or wind' element provided the breathing and the gases needed for life; it helped in movement and carrying of information as sound waves. The 'sky' element acted as the great cosmic womb in which the entire creation would be conceived, live and finally find its rest.

To ensure that none of these elements got the better of the other, the cosmic creator ensured a fine balance by neutralizing one with the other. For example, 'fire' had its antidote in water and air (because no matter how fierce the fire is, it can be doused by water and blown away by wind); the 'water' element had its antidote in fire and earth (because the fire can evaporate water and make it vanish, while the water vanishes in the bowl of the earth in a desert); the 'air or wind' had its nemesis in the fire and sky (because even though the air is static it is forced to move when heated, and the strongest of storms vanish in the endless bowls of the sky); the 'earth' element has found its balancing factor in the sky, water and fire elements (because at the end of its tenure the earth would disintegrate and vanish in the sky, the earth is but a tiny dot in the deep dark recesses of the cosmos; at the time of the great dooms-day deluge the earth would be submerged in water, and the fire can scorch earth and render it un-inhabitable); and finally the 'sky' also has its antidote in the rest of the four elements (because the sky symbolising space cannot and does not exist in solid rocks or earth, a block of ice or water, in a fierce fire because that fire occupies all space to burn and would chase away every trace of air inside it, and inside specific gases which are forms of air).]"

The *location, colours and Beej Mantras* of the *five elements* have been described in *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 85-102. It goes on to describe how meditation is to be done on these five elements as manifestations of the stupendous dynamic powers of Brahm which has enabled this existence to come into being and sustain itself independently, as well as the rewards or benefits of such meditation. To quote—

“Verse no. 85 = The earth element is present as a dominant force from the foot to the knees. This earth has four directions, has a subtle yellow colour, and its seed Mantra is the Sanskrit letter (Varna) ‘La’ (as in ‘love’). [There is another connotation of this last part of the verse. The earth is said to contain large and infinite deposits of ‘salts’ as ores etc. The ocean is also salty. The last word of this verse, i.e. ‘Lavarna’, indicates this fact.] (85).

“Verse no. 86 = This is the place where the patron God of earth known as Brahma, the four armed and four headed¹ creator of creation, has his symbolic presence. [In other words, the earth is represented by the creator Brahma. This is because the entire living world as we know it is present here on earth and no other planet. The earth is the only known inhabited part of the entire creation where creatures having life and consciousness in them—right from the one-celled amoeba up to the most complex and intelligently developed ones like the humans—live.]

In order to witness his presence and have his (Brahma’s) subtle vision, the ascetic should inject and cover the earth element along with its seed Mantra ‘La’ with the vital winds or airs so that they are blended and a harmony is established between them. This results in the revelation of Brahma with the above features and with the complexion of gold (86).

[Note—¹There is a lot of symbolism in Hinduism, and if it is not properly understood in the correct context, a lot of hilarious, absurd and ridiculous situations arise, such as this Brahma with ‘four arms and four heads’. From a rational perspective, this is absolute rubbish. But if one were to understand the underlying symbolism and philosophy, things assume a rational meaning. The four heads of Brahma stand for the four Vedas he created or pronounced. These Vedas are the repositories of all knowledge that exist in this creation, and they are the Rig, Sam, Yajur and Atharva. The four arms stand for the four directions of the globe—the north, west, south and east. Since he is the creator of the visible creation, he is expected to take care of the entire earth because it is on earth that all living creatures created by him would live.

Therefore, his four arms are symbolic of his duty and ability of taking care of all the four corners of this living world, and the four Vedas indicate his all-encompassing and all-inclusive knowledge, wisdom and erudition that empower and enable him to do so.

The colour of gold indicates the colour of richness, prosperity and fertility. The egg’s yolk is also yellow because it harbours life and is rich with all essential nutrients needed by the nascent creation in its miniature form as the embryo.]

“Verse no. 87 = By concentrating one’s attention and doing meditation for a period of five Ghatis (two hours) in the above described manner, an ascetic is able to conquer or subdue the earth element; he becomes the Lord of this element. Such an ascetic never dies due to some kind of shortcoming, fault, weakness or imperfection of the earth element in the body, or any injury caused by it to the body (87).

“Verse no. 88 = The water element has a predominant presence in the region from the knee to the anus. It is symbolically shaped like a half-moon, and its seed Mantra is ‘Vam’ (as in ‘vulgar + sum) (88).

“Verse no. 89-90 = This is the place of symbolic residence of the patron God of water known as Sri Narayan (Lord Vishnu), the four armed, exalted and high Lord who has a crown over his head¹ (indicative of his position as the Lord and emperor of the entire living world), who is pure as crystal (because he is untainted, without any blemish and cannot be demoted from his exalted stature inspite of the fact that he has to look after the routine chores of taking care of the mundane affairs of the multifaceted world ridden with corruption and blemishes of all imaginable types, being its sustainer, nourisher and protector), and who is wearing a yellow coloured cloth (symbolic of his ability to sustain, nourish and protect the world as its emperor).

In order to witness his presence and have his subtle vision, the ascetic should inject and cover the water element along with its seed Mantra ‘Vam’ with the vital winds or airs so that they are blended and a harmony is established between them. This results in the revelation of Narayan with the above features in his inner self. He should focus his attention and mind on this vision for a period of five Ghatis (two hours). This helps him in getting rid of all sins and their evil consequences (89-90).

[Note—¹Lord Vishnu is the sustainer, nourisher and protector of all creatures. His four arms are indicative of this unique ability of his. Now, let us see what are those four units of creation which he is supposed to look after.

There are four types of creatures—viz. (i) ‘Andaj’ (those born from an egg, e.g. birds; (ii) ‘Swadej’ (those born from sweat and dampness, e.g. bacteria, fungi and lice; (iii) ‘Udbhij’ (those born from seeds, e.g. plants; and (iv) ‘Jarayuj’ (those born from an embryo inside the womb, e.g. a man).

Then we have four classes of people in the society, called the four Varanas, and each has four phases, called the four Ashrams. The Hindu society has been divided

into four sections or classes by ancient sages to regulate its functioning by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. These four sections are— (a) Brahmins—the learned and teaching class; a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural Being called Brahm. They also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kshatriyas—they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaishyas—they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life. And finally (d) the Shudras—the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged.

Finally, the four Ashrams are the following—(a) Brahmacharya—this is the 1st phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life style of a boarding school. (b) Grihasta—when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the 2nd phase called Grihasta Ashram which is a householder's life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life alongside the dealings with this deceptive world with all its accompanying horrifying problems. (c) Vanprastha—this is the 3rd phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) Sanyas—this is the 4th and last stage of life when there is complete cutting-off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and meditation, living a life of total renunciation, and begging for food for survival while single mindedly endeavouring for emancipation and salvation. This phase of Sanyas also has many stages depending upon the spiritual elevation and accomplishments of the aspirant, viz. Kutichak, Bahudak, Hansa, Paramhans, Turiyatit and Avadhut.

These four Ashrams, their characteristic features and virtues are described in detail in an Upanishad called 'Ashramo-panishad' belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition.

Thus we see that the four arms of Vishnu are indicative of his unique ability to protect the entire world of living creatures.]

“Verse no. 91 = After that, the ascetic need not fear from the water element in anyway, and neither would he die due to it (such as by drowning or by dehydration or thirst).

The fire element has its dominant presence from the anus to the heart region. [That is why all digestion of food and all the major internal organs that are responsible for the upkeep of the body and to continue the cycle of creation and prevent its extinguishing, such as the intestines, kidneys, the reproductive organs, the pancreas etc. are located in this region. It is here that the Kundalini is also located at the base of the spine. Without the presence of the heat in the lower part of the body, the vital airs cannot be heated and empowered to lift the body of an ascetic as has

been described in verse no. 53-55 of this Upanishad. In practical life also we observe that the fire is always present at the lower end of the oven and not on its top.] (91).

“Verse no. 92 = The fire element has three corners (i.e. it is shaped symbolically like a triangle), has a red colour and the Sanskrit letter ‘Ra’ (as in ‘run’) as its seed or root Mantra. This fire should be stoked and ignited by injecting the air or wind element into it. [This is a common day phenomenon that the fire needs air to remain burning.] (92).

“Verse no. 93 = This is the symbolic abode of Lord Rudra or Shiva. [That is, he symbolises the fire element.] One should meditate upon this Lord who has three eyes¹, who is the one renowned for granting boons (to his followers and devotees, and in the presence case to the ascetic), who is as splendid, illuminated and radiant as a sun which has just risen, and who has the ash of the fire sacrifice smeared all over his body (just like an ascetic, indicating that he is their great icon and patron deity of ascetics) (93).

[Note—¹As in the case of Brahma and Vishnu, the symbolism of Shiva having three eyes, which on the face of it appears to be an anomaly, is the following—his two eyes are the conventional eyes, and his third symbolises his deep insight and great wisdom and enlightenment. Shiva personifies the fire element which also has a symbolic significance. The fire is known to burn all impurities present in gold when it is put into it, thereby purifying the metal. Similarly, fire is used in blast furnaces to extract iron from its ore. Fire has the inherent ability to reduce to ashes all filth and garbage, which is a metaphoric way of saying that a person who has worshipped this element in the form of Shiva is supposed to have burnt all his faults, blemishes and shortcomings that taint his character and soul, thereby purifying his inner self. The ash is indicative of total renunciation and detachment from the world of materialism, because it is indicative of a renunciate way of life and symbolically stands for burning of everything into the fire pit. That is why Lord Shiva has been called the patron God of ascetics, hermits and Sanyasis who worship the fire element only.

Besides these points, Shiva is the God assigned the task of concluding the world which necessitates his being closely associated with the ‘fire element’ in the sense that he must be as unrelenting, merciless, powerful and ferocious as the latter in order to conclude this creation inspite of all the odds. He must reduce everything to ashes just like the fire does. And it is from this ash that the new creation would emerge in due course. Herein lie the magic of creation and its chief Lord, Brahm, the Supreme Being—the fact that a new creation rises from ashes!]

“Verse no. 94 = By meditating this way on the fire element and Lord Shiva for a period of five Ghatis (two hours), the ascetic cannot be tormented by the fire element so much so that it cannot burn or scorch him even if he is made to enter a fiercely burning fire (94).

“Verse no. 95 = The next vital primary element is the air element and it is primarily located in the body between the heart and the middle of the eyebrows in the forehead. It has a symbolic shape of a hexagon, is dark hued, and its seed or root Mantra is the Sanskrit letter ‘Ya’ (as in ‘yearn’). The apex of this hexagon is at the point in the forehead where the two eyebrows meet, and where the third eye of wisdom is said to be located. That is why it is said to possess the quality of ‘Bhaasvar’, i.e. to be as bright as the sun during the day time (95).

[Note—In practical terms also, the primary wind that sustains life inside the otherwise dead and inane body is the breath that is inhaled thorough the nose and

diverted to the lungs. Both these organs are located in the body in the region between the heart and the mid point of the eyebrows. If we join these organs, i.e. if a line is drawn linking the two lobes of the lungs, the triangular heart, the two shoulders and the root of the nose which has two openings, we will come with a rough shape of a hexagon. The lower-end point would be roughly the lower end of the sternum (i.e. the mid point between the heart and the lungs, the middle of the body where the ribs meet and the heart is felt to throb), and the other end is the root of the nose between the two eyebrows. Since the lower end is embedded in the abdomen, it is said to be 'dark or Krishna' in hue, while the upper end is said to be 'Bhaasvar' or like the sun because it is the location of the two eyes as well as the third eye of wisdom.]

“Verse no. 96 = The vital air or wind element is located in the body in the designated place marked by the letter ‘Ya’ of the Sanskrit language (as described in verse no. 95). The ascetic should always remember the all-knowing, omniscient and all-pervading Lord of all creation, known as Ishwar, in this region. This Lord is called ‘Vishwatomukham’, literally the face of the entire world¹ (96).

[Note—The Ishwar is called the ‘face of the world’ obviously because when we see anyone, we first see his face and the person is recognised by his face. Since the entire creation is the visible manifestation of the supreme Brahm, it is the visible face of Brahm or Ishwar. This Ishwar is also the all-pervading supreme Brahm in the form of the conscious Atma which resides in the individual creature as his true ‘self’, as well as in the form of the universal Spirit that is indistinguishable from the air or wind element which pervades throughout the world. Even as the air element is uniformly and universally present everywhere in this creation, this ‘spirit’ is therefore also present in equal measure everywhere. This spirit in the form of the air element is Ishwar or Lord of the world in the sense that no life is possible without it on this earth.]

“Verse no. 97 = If the ascetic meditates upon the supreme Lord called Vishwatomukh for a continuous period of five Ghatis (two hours), he can travel or move about in the sky just like the wind or air element. [In other words, he becomes as light as the air or wind element.] He has no fear from this element anymore and he never dies due to this element. [In other words, he never suffers from any disease related to the air or wind in the body such as from asthma, flatulence, improper movement of bowels, digestion, distribution of nutrients and blood inside the body, and all other functions that are governed by one or the other vital winds inside the body. He has not to suffer from suffocation and the fear from falling from a high place and dieing because in that case he would float in the air. Storms and other fierce forms of the wind cannot harm him also.] (97).

“Verse no. 98 = The sky element is located between the point midway of the two eyebrows and the top of the head. It is shaped like the sky (i.e. featureless, measureless and like an inverted parabolic transparent dish or bowl), is of the colour of smoke, and its seed or root Mantra is the Sanskrit letter ‘Ha’ (as in ‘hut’). It is illuminated with a diffused light like the sky is during the daytime (98).

“Verse no. 99 = The ascetic should inject this sky element and fill it with the air or wind, and visualise that Lord Shankar (Shiva) is present here, seated on the letter ‘Ha’¹. This Lord is a personification of the great Lord of all the Gods, and hence also known as Mahadeva², literally the great God. This Mahadeva is like a dot or point³ on the one hand, and like the vast, endless, featureless and infinite sky⁴ on the other

hand. In the latter form he is known as Sada Shiva⁵, i.e. the eternal and ever-present Lord Shiva (99).

[Note—¹There is a lot of brilliant symbolism here. The letter 'Ha' is the first letter of the word 'Hans', meaning the divine swan. This bird is said to be very clean and wise, and therefore is the vehicle of the goddess of learning and wisdom, goddess Saraswati. By saying that the patron Lord of the sky element sits on this letter 'Ha', it is meant that this Lord is wisdom, erudition, learning and knowledge personified, he has full command over them. Hence he is the supreme Brahm.

²By this logic, Shankar is another name of Brahm. Since Brahm is the one from whom the entire creation has emerged, he is the greatest of all the Gods and their Lord, hence he is called Mahadeva. Thus, Mahadeva and Shankar become interchangeable and synonymous.

³The origin of the creation was due to a vibration in the cosmic primordial gel much like ripples on the surface of a calm lake. This generated waves and these waves created energy to power the initial phases of the process of creation. But the vibration must have started from one single point. This is the 'dot' referred in this verse. It also refers to the fact that everything in existence has its origin from one 'point' source known as Brahm. The concept of Bindu and 'dot' have been explained in Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 2, 37, 39-40, and Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 1, 5 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

⁴Now, this Brahm is not limited to one single point, but it spread as far and wide as the vast sky could spread. It was diffused in the sky like smoke, and that is why the colour of the sky element is symbolically depicted to be like that of the smoke.

⁵'Shiva' means someone who is auspicious, truthful and beautiful, and 'Sada' means one who is always the same, is constant, perpetual, consistent, ever-present, uniform and universal. All these qualities are present in the supreme Brahm. That is why the latter is called Sada Shiva.

So in a nutshell, Shankar and Shiva is the same great God who is the Lord of all the Gods as well as of the rest of the creation, i.e. the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being, personified, besides possessing all the qualities of wisdom, erudition, sagacity, knowledge, expertise, various skills etc. personified by goddess Saraswati riding on the Hans. The concept of 'Hans' has been elaborately explained in a number of Upanishads, viz. (a) Krishna Yajur Veda—Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 6; Canto 6, verse no. 15; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3-4; Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 24, 61-65; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 16, 20-28, 34, 60-64, 78-79; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-132, Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11, and Canto 6, verse no. 20, 52-54. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda—Hansopanishad is exclusively dedicated to explain the concept of the pure conscious Atma by way of using the metaphor of a Hans. (c) Sam Veda—Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 82-83.]

“Verse no. 100 = This Lord Shiva is most pure and immaculate, and as clear and clean as pure crystal. He has a crescent moon tucked in the lock of hairs on his head. He has five mouths, is very sober, gentle and pleasant, has ten arms and three eyes (100).

[Note—Since Lord Shiva is the patron God of Yogis or those ascetics who do Yoga, especially those who practice its exercises and rituals as propounded by Patanjali, and this Upanishad deals with Yoga, the supreme transcendental Supreme Being known as Brahm of metaphysics and Upanishad is personified here in him.

Lord Shiva has been depicted in the Purans as having a *crescent moon* on his forehead. The moon is said to have sixteen Kalaas or phases, symbolising the sixteen Kalaas or aspects out of the total of sixty four Kalaas of the supreme Brahm. These sixteen Kalaas represent the visible world which is one fourth part of the entire creation consisting of the remaining of the Kalaas of Brahm. The visible world is

called ‘one Pada’ or one leg or one aspect or Kalaa of Brahm. So, Shiva is the Lord who presides over the entire visible part of creation, and this world is his ornamentation in the sense that the Lord appears to be so beautiful if we consider the beauty of Nature as the astounding beauty and the expert craftsmanship of Shiva on display.

The *five heads* of Shiva stand for the ‘Panch Vyom’ or the five forms that the sky element is said to have. According to Vedanta, the concept of the sky or ‘Akash’ has many connotations. According to one interpretation, there are *five* subtle skies representing the space surrounding the five sheaths or *Koshas* present in the body of a creature. They are the sheaths that surround the Atma and are called ‘Panch Akash’. These are the following—(1) the Food Sheath called Anna Maye Kosh; (2) the Vital Air Sheath called Pran Maye Kosh; (3) the Mental Sheath called Manomaye Kosh; (4) the Intellectual Sheath called Vigyan Maye Kosh; and (5) the Bliss Sheath called Anand Maye Kosh. Ref.-- Mudgal Upanishad, 4/5 of the Rig Veda.

The *ten arms* of Shiva stand for the ten forms of the subtle sky element. They are the following—(1) Ghatakash—the space inside a hollow pot; (2) Mathakash—the space inside a holy building, such as a holy shrine, a monastery, an abbey etc.; (3) Hridayakash—the subtle space inside the heart; (4) Akash—the vacant or blank space above the earth; (5) Suryakash—the space of the solar system; the space around the sun, or the solar system illuminated by the light of the sun; (6) Paraakash—the space above or beyond the solar system, it is said to burn with the celestial fire; (7) Mahakash—the great sky that is aglow with divine illumination, the heaven; that space which is radiant with a divine glow; (8) Paramakash—the supreme sky beyond the Mahakash, it is said to be very magnificent and encloses everything that exists, including all the other skies; that space which is illuminated, all pervading, all encompassing and full of bliss and felicity; (9) Tattwakash—the elementary space that is at the core of the concept of space, or the space that surrounds the basic elements of creation; by natural corollary it refers to the subtle, sublime, ethereal and supreme space where the eternal, transcendental Brahm has his abode because Brahm is the cause of all the basic elements of creation; there is complete beatitude and felicity there; that space which surrounds the essential truth known as Brahm; and (10) Anatariksha—the physical space where stars are present in deep space; the intergalactic space. Besides these, there is one more space called ‘Swarga’ which means heaven or the Duloka.

These skies have been ascribed different names just to facilitate understanding, and not because any one form of sky is fundamentally different from the other. For example, the space present inside the mud-pot, called the Ghata-kash, is the same as the space present outside the body of the pot. When the pot is broken, the demarcation wall of the body of the pot is removed, and both the space inside and outside of the erstwhile pot become indistinguishably and inseparably the same. Therefore, the various names are artificial and misnomers.

The *three eyes* consist of two normal conventional eyes and the third eye of wisdom and deep insight.]

“Verse no. 101 = That Lord Shiva is armed with all types of weapons (as a symbol of protection against or to counter all sorts of worldly evils and faults that might attack a spiritual aspirant and attempt to pull him down from the exalted position that he has acquired by so hard effort). He is also decorated with numerous ornaments (as a symbol of his divine beauty and magnificence, as a token of his natural charm and a pleasant and appealing appearance). Goddess Parvati his divine consort and she literally is his other half. [That is, if Shiva is the supreme Brahm or Supreme Being, Parvati is his Prakriti and Maya. If Shiva is the Viraat Purush, Parvati is Mother Nature.] He is the one who grants boons and is the root and primary cause of all conceivable causes and reasons that exist in this world (101).

“Verse no. 102 = If that Lord Shiva is meditated upon as a personification of the sky element and as being inherently present in this element, it is certain that the practitioner is able to acquire the mystical powers to move through the sky (like a bird or other sky-borne creatures).

By this meditation, the spiritual aspirant feels an immense sense of satisfaction and happiness no matter where he lives¹ (102).

[Note--¹This is because he feels the freedom to move about any where he likes, and is not constrained to the earth. Another interpretation is that he feels as light as the air or wind element because this is the only element that fills the entire space of the sky and can move in at its will. He feels unrestrained and free like the bird. He also feels untainted, unblemished, un-faulted and untarnished like the pure and colourless sky element. He feels infinite, vast, open, eternal and imperishable as the sky element. He feels himself as being all-pervading, omnipresent and all-covering just like the sky element. This notion and feeling would naturally be spiritually and emotionally uplifting and morale boosting for him; he would feel elated and accomplished.]”

How the body of the creature is formed by the five elements have been described in *Shaarirako Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 1 as follows—“This gross body of the creature is a combination of the five basic elements in creation called the ‘Pancha Mahabhuts’, such as earth etc. (the others being water, fire, air and sky)¹.

The solid, thicker, denser and heavier part of the body is made up of the earth element. [For example, the bones, skin, nails, hairs etc.]

The fluid part is made up of the water element. [For example, blood, lymph, semen, mucous, urine, semi-solid stool etc.] The heat and warmth in the living body is the fire element. [A dead body is ice-cold, and since the fire element is missing in such a body, it cannot live and is deemed to be lifeless.]

The constant movement and restlessness that is so typical of any living organism is a manifestation of the air or wind element. [This movement may not be externally visible, but is always there in some form or the other. For example, the heart continues to beat and the blood flows uninterruptedly even while a man sleeps; all the internal organs such as the kidneys, lungs, intestines, brain etc. continue to function during this state though externally there is no activity. A man breathes continuously though ‘breath’ cannot be visibly seen. Breath is nothing but the air element in its life-giving role. The Trishkhi Brahmin Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 8 says that the movement of the consciousness inside the body is through the different Naadis or ducts such as nerves, veins and the like. This consciousness is metaphorically represented by the different ‘Gods’ that are said to moving in these Naadis and controlling their respective functioning. These Gods who personifies various forces of Nature are also metaphors for the Pran’s different forms because they regulate life in a living body. In other words, the ‘consciousness’ and ‘Pran’ or the wind element are synonymous with each other and together are equally responsible to keep the body alive. The body of any living being cannot survive without either of them. Even immobile forms of living creation such a plants continue their activities day and night without resting for a moment. The importance of air for the life can be proved by keeping someone in a vacuum—sure enough he would die immediately. In fact, life and movement are synonymous with each other; only a dead body shows no movement in the real sense. Similarly, life and air are also synonymous with each other.]

The hollow space present in the body in a very subtle and invisible form (such as the space between the organs and the inter-cellular space, and even the space inside

the cell between its constituent parts, the pores on the skin, the hollow of the nostrils, the auditory canal, the hollow of the mouth and anus, the air passage of the lungs and the food passage of the digestive canal et al.) is made up of the sky or space element (1).

[Note—¹The five primary elements called the ‘Tattvas’ came into being at the very beginning of creation. The Tattvas are the primary or fundamental elements or units or dimensions or aspects of creation which act as the building blocks of creation, not only as its brickwork but also to decide the shape its exterior façade would take as well as the interior character and quality of the construction.

We have *primary elements* that were formed at the time of creation, and the *secondary elements* that developed later on as offshoots to the process of creation. Primarily there were five basic elements—such as the sky, air or wind, fire or energy, water and earth in increasing order of density or grossness. From them came the secondary elements. These latter vary according to the level and dynamics of creation one is dealing with in terms of metaphysics. These elements can be compared to the elements of material science of the modern world, such as the elements calcium, magnesium, potassium, selenium etc. which are heavier and grosser in nature as compared to other elements such as the gases oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, helium etc. which are lighter and subtler. Then there is carbon which is the base of an entire field of chemistry called organic chemistry, much like we have Atma in metaphysics, that in association with different other elements form a vast array of organic chemicals and material products of daily use. If carbon is compared to the basic unit called the Atma in metaphysics, then the other elements that combine with it are the various Gunas, Vikaars, Vasanas and Vrittis that surround this Atma to give rise to an uncountable number of creatures of different virtues, nature, temperaments, characters and personalities.

In this scenario, Brahm would be like the primary Atom which left to itself is neutral and inactive. It is only when certain changes take place in its core, such as the shift in the position of its electron or change in the number of its protons and electrons etc. that the chain of reaction starts that would ultimately result in not only producing newer elements that combine in mind-boggling permutations and combinations to create an endless array of material things, but also releasing energy in the process or absorbing matter from the surrounding atmosphere. At the cosmic level this is seen in exploding stars or formation of huge black-holes.

The Atma would be more like the atom of carbon which is at the heart of all organic compounds that exist in this world, while Brahm would be the primary form of the atom, i.e. the atom of the first element of the Periodic Table with atomic number 1, or even the nucleus of other heavier atoms of the higher elements of this Table from atomic number 2 onwards.]

“verse no. 2 = “The five sense organs of perception are called ‘Gyan Indris’, such as ears etc. (the others being eyes, nose, tongue and skin).

The ears represent the sky element; the ears are the manifestations of the sky element. [The ears have the function of hearing, but it can hear only if the sound reaches it. Sound would need open space and an ethereal medium to travel and reach the ear because it does so in the form of waves. That is why the ears turn towards the direction in the sky from where the sound comes. The ears are like the modern day radar that is made to turn and rotate in order to optimize the reception of sound. That is why we cannot hear anything if there is a solid obstruction between the origin of sound and the ears because it would obstruct the path of the movement of sound waves traveling in the ether present in the space of the sky between the origin point of the sound and the ear.]

The skin represents the air element; the skin is the manifestation of the air or wind element. [The skin has the function of feeling the sense of touch. When a soft breeze blows over our skin, it can immediately feel being subtly and softly massaged by the former. The excellent ability of the skin to exhibit the subtle sense of touching and feeling anything in its subtlest form is manifested when it can feel the air or wind blowing over it, because this air or wind is not physically seen but its presence nevertheless 'felt and known'. Similarly, when a fire is burning fiercely, one gets scorched by its heat though one does not actually touch it. This happens because the hot air coming in from the fire touches the skin and makes it feel scorched and hot. This feeling and sensation is the exclusive domain of the skin, for the ears, eyes, nose and the tongue can't do so. Their sphere of activity and functions are different from one another.]

The eyes represent the fire element; the eyes are the manifestations of the fire element. [The eye can see anything only if the latter is illuminated, or there is light in the general surrounding area; it cannot see anything in dark. The fire element has light as one of its integral characteristic feature—where there is a fire burning, there would be light. That is why a fire is lit in the forest to ward off wild animals because they are scared by its light and leaping flames. The fire element has heat and energy inherent in it too, and the eyes can perceive the existence of anything if the fire element manifests itself even in its non-visible form as heat and energy as is evident from modern day night-vision instruments such as night-vision goggles etc. which precisely exploit this phenomenon of the ability of the eye to perceive the existence of anything if there are subtle components of fire element present in the thing viewed. The infra-red rays that are emitted by anything not frigid cold are translated into vision by these specialised instruments. In the absence of the light in the visible spectrum, the eye utilizes the subtler components of fire, such as heat and energy and the infra-red rays emanated by anything that is warm or hot, to perceive things. Similarly, modern day weapons which have so-called smart electronic eyes can home on to their targets relying upon heat emanating from them.]

The tongue represents the water element; the tongue is the manifestation of the water element. [The tongue can taste anything only when the enzymes of taste present in the saliva dissolve the chemicals present in the food tasted. Suppose a piece of iron is put on the tongue. Would it enjoy its taste as much as it longs for a delicious sweet dish? This is because the water element is not present in the solid piece of iron that can enable the enzymes of the saliva to taste iron like it would taste, say for example, a piece of dry fruit or a grain of rice which are also relatively hard as compared to cooked soft food. Even uncooked and raw food does not appeal to the tongue as much as properly cooked food for this precise reason—the chemicals of uncooked food do not sufficiently dissolve in water present in the saliva to interact with the enzymes of taste. Until the water has softened the food, the latter cannot be gulped; it would get stuck either in the mouth or in the throat. That is why of all the external organs of the body, it is the tongue that is the moistest and supple.]

The nose represents the earth element; the nose is the manifestation of the earth element. [The nose has the main function of smelling, and smell has its origin in anything that is gross and that has an affinity to the earth by preferring to be near it. This is evident from the fact that there is no smell in outer space; we smell things only when we land on the earth. Even on earth, places that are symbolic of life and fertility, such as green and moist areas rich in fauna and flora give out a fragrance, whether likable or not, but dry and parched areas of the same earth, such as arid deserts and snow covered mountains do not harbour smell. A garden is full of fragrances of

flowers and the sweet aroma of fruits which spread over large areas in the surrounding place, even carried to far distances by the wind, but if we were to rise above the surface of the earth, say in a hot air balloon, the smells would not be smelt by us high up in the sky. In other words, smell has a direct affinity to earth and things that this earth harbours. That is why we have such terms as ‘earthy smell’, such as the one that comes out from earthen pots and mud houses. Wherever there is earth element, there would be a subtle and sublime ‘smell’ typical of life in all its forms.]

The respective senses of perceptions of these sense organs are word (sound—pertaining to the organ known as the ear), touch (feeling—pertaining to the organ known as the skin), form and shape (sight—pertaining to the organ known as the eye), the various genres of taste (pertaining to the organ known as the tongue), and smell (both the sweet and the foul—pertaining to the organ known as the nose).

All these perceptions and their organs have their origin in the five basic elements of creation, called the ‘Panch Maha Bhuts’ (2).

“verse no. 3 = [This verse describes the different organs of action of the gross body and their functions.]

The organs of action are the following—the organ of speech (i.e. the mouth), the hands, the legs, the anus and the genitals.

Their functions are respectively to speak (mouth), to take and give (hand), to move and go to some place (leg), to excrete waste products from the body (anus), and to reproduce (genital).

All of them have their origin in the Maha Bhuts such as the earth element etc. (the others being water, fire, air and sky elements). [This is because since everything in existence have their origin in these five elements which act as the fundamental building blocks of creation, the bricks of the edifice known as creation, nothing exists that do not have one or the other of these five basic elements playing a role in its existence.] (3).

The *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 69 describes that Yoga brings about a union between the various elements or ‘Dhaatus’ of the body.

These DHAATUS are five primary elements, seventeen and twenty three secondary elements which would depend upon the system of classification adopted, nine tertiary elements, and finally the seven structural elements. Now let us see which are they.

(a) The Primary level of the elements—This consists of the five primary elements called the ‘Pancha Mahabhuts’. They were formed at the beginning of creation, and consist of earth, water or fluid, fire or energy, air or wind and sky or space elements in increasing degree of subtlety.

They can be studied at two levels—one at the very core level, and the other at the more general level.

(a) (i) The study of the body at the core level of the five Bhuts consisting of the five primary elements consisting of the sky or space, air or wind, fire or energy, water or fluids, and earth. Refer verse nos. 1-2, and 5-6 of Shaarirako-panishad. Briefly, the earth element formed the solid part of the body, the water element formed the fluid part, the fire element formed the warmth and heat of the body, the movement of the body is revelation of the air element, and the subtle space between various

organs and tissues of the body, both at the external as well as internal levels, is the sky element.

(a) (ii) The next level would be the various Koshas or Sheaths that are made of a combination of these five elements. They are the following—Anna Maye Kosh (the food sheath), Pran Maye Kosh (the vital wind sheath), Manomaye Kosh (the mind sheath), Vigyan Maye Kosh (the intellect sheath), and Anand Maye Kosh (the bliss sheath). These Koshas are also like the elements or units that decide the complexities of the creature's body and its position in the hierarchy of evolution.

All the living organisms can be classified into the following five types depending upon the number of Koshas they have—(i) Udbhij—these are those life forms that are born from seeds, such as members of the plant kingdom. These have only one Kosha, the Anna Maye Kalaa. In other words, they depend on food and become food for others higher up in the evolutionary ladder. (ii) Swedaj—they are those which are born from dampness and sweat, such as fungi, algae, bacteria, germs, mosquito, lice, flies etc. They have two Koshas, viz. Anna Maye and Pran Maye. That is, they are formed from food, they live for food and they die as food. Besides this, they also exhibit signs of life, e.g. the mosquito and lice have life like any other member of the animal kingdom. (iii) Andaj—they are placed higher up in the evolutionary ladder, and are born from eggs, whether inside the mother's womb or outside. Such birds as pigeon, sparrow, parrot, peacock etc. come under this category. They have three Koshas which are Anna Maye, Pran Maye and Mano-maye. The last Kosh refers to the fact that such creatures have a mind and heart which enables them to think, albeit in a primitive level. (iv) Jaruyuj—these are the creatures that are born as embryo that develops inside the mother's womb. Under this class come the animals such as horses, cows, dogs, elephants etc. They have four Koshas, such as Anna Maye, Pran Maye, Mano-maye and Vigyan Maye. The last Kosh refers to their ability to have a higher level of thinking ability called intelligence. The human being comes under this last category with the added benefit of having five Koshas. Besides the four Koshas mentioned above in other creatures of this category, the man has the fifth one and it is called the Anand Maye Kosh. It is only possessed by a man and not by other creatures in the sense that the man can realise the true meaning of the terms 'bliss and happiness that is eternal and substantial' by the virtue of his attaining higher level of intelligence and his ability to delve into the secrets of the concept of truth itself and then realising that kind of happiness and bliss that is not superficial and which is not limited to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the body and the material comforts of the world, but which has a holistic and all-inclusive dimension that incorporates the spirit or the soul.

(b) The secondary level of study of the body and its structure would be at the level of the Tattvas. It consists of the Linga Deha made up of the seventeen Tattvas which are seventeen dimensions or units or elements that constitute it—the five organs of perception (ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin) + the five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + the five Prans (the five subtle forms of the vital winds present inside the body—such as Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Vyan and Udaana) + one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) = seventeen units or elements of creation at the micro level. [Reference: Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 16.]

The gross body can be further classified as consisting of twenty three elements. They are the following—

(1) The five gross organs of perception present in the body such as the ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose make up the five gross units or elements of creation at the micro level of the body of the creature. [Total 5 organs of perception.]

(2) Then there are the five organs of action such as the anus, genital, hand, leg and speech (mouth). These are the five gross organs which add their count to the number of elements or units or dimensions that exist in this creation at the micro level. [Total 5 organs of action.]

(3) Besides these, there are the five subtle sense perceptions such as the perceptions of hearing (relevant to the ear), feeling or touching (relevant to the skin), seeing various forms and shapes (relevant to the eye and the faculty of sight), taste (relevant to the tongue) and smell (relevant to the nose). [Total 5 senses of perception.] (4) The eight Vikaars such as one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) + one Ahankar (pride and arrogance) + one Akash element + one air element + one fire element + one water element + one earth element = total of eight elements that cast their shadow on the purity of Nature (just like the shadow of the earth casts its shadow on the bright moon to result in the lunar eclipse). These elements are called the eight 'Vikaars' (literally meaning faults, errors, shortcomings or imperfections) that are present in Nature and affect the basic nature of all living beings.

Thus the tally comes to twenty three elements of creation as follows—5 organs of perceptions + 5 organs of action + 5 senses of perceptions + 8 Vikaars = total 23. [Reference Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 17-19.]

(c) The next level of study of the body is the tertiary level. The tertiary elements that constitute the body all living beings would be the following nine—the three Gunas such as the Sata which the best quality in creation, the Raja which is the medium quality, and the Tama which is the lowest quality (refer Shaarirako-panishad, verse nos. 7-13), and the six aspects of Anatahakarans which is the inner self of the creature consisting of the sub-conscious or conscience that governs his innate character. The five aspects of Anthahakaran are the following (1) Mana or mind, (2) Buddhi or intellect, (3) Chitta or the faculty of concentration and memory; knowledge and consciousness, (4) Ahankar or ego, pride, arrogance, (5) Vrittis or inherent character, traits, habits, inclinations and temperaments of a creature based on these basic components of the subtle body—refer Paingalo-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 3), and (6) the various Vasanas (worldly passions, lusts and yearnings—Muktiko-panishad, Canto 2). The total comes to $3 + 6 = 9$. These nine decide the inherent character and basic nature and temperament of the creature.

(d) The 7 Dhaatus—The structural features of the gross physical body consists of the so-called seven Dhaatus. These stand for the structural constituent of the body which supports and sustains its existence. According to ancient Indian system of medicine, they are the following—(1) Rasa (lymph and mucous; sap), (2) Rakta (blood), (3) Maansa (flesh), (4) Meda (fat and muscles), (5) Ashthi (bones and cartilage), (6) Meja (marrow), and (7) Shukra (semen).

According to other interpretations, these seven Dhaatus which form the structural features of the gross body and give it its shape and support it are the following—(1) all forms of fluid ingredients such as blood, urine, mucous, lymph etc, (2) bone and cartilage, (3) marrow, (4) flesh, fat and muscles, (5) abdominal organs such as stomach etc, (6) skin, and (7) Naadis (arteries, veins, capillaries and nerves).

(e) The structure of the body as explained in the Upanishads can be easily understood when we analyse it in the context of modern science of chemistry. This gross body of a creature can be compared to the molecular structure of any chemical substance or any thing in this world for that matter that is made up of certain basic elements. The molecules are also not visible to the naked eye just like the ingredients

of the body mentioned above except some of them such as the skin and mucous much like the external features of the finished chemical product.

At the next level comes the atomic structure, or the subtle level of constitution of the body. It is like the atoms of any chemical molecule that make up the basic building blocks or units of that molecule. For example, Benzene has a hexagonal structure which would be like the gross structure of the creature's body called the Dhaatu, while the Carbon and Hydrogen atoms (C_6H_6) that go in to form the basic and fundamental ingredients of Benzene are like its subtle structure called the Bhut.

To understand how one element can transform itself into so many forms, we can take the example of isomerism in chemistry. The word 'iso' means the 'same', and 'meros' means 'parts'. Hence, isomerism refers to the phenomenon whereby two or more compounds that are composed of the same chemical formulae, i.e. they have the same molecular composition but different three dimensional structures; they differ in physical or chemical properties. Such things are called 'isomers' of the principal element.

Extended further, this phenomenon of isomerism would apply to the concept of the same Atma residing in all the living beings having a mind boggling variety of physical structures, besides the fact that all the creatures have the same Atma as well as the same basic elements as their essential identity.

Then there are two types of isomerism—i.e. structural isomerism and stereo isomerism. The concept of structural isomerism refer to those isomers which have the same molecular formulae but different structural arrangement of atoms or groups of atoms around the central atom or ion called Structural Isomers and this phenomenon is called structural isomerism. This would be like different species of living organisms which have the same Atma at the core, the same set of fundamental five elements set up around this basic core, and then comes the arrangements of secondary elements around this basic core to give rise to varying structural variations in the species as they evolved.

Stereo isomerism is when the same molecular formula represents two or more compounds which differ in the spatial arrangement of atoms or groups of atoms. Such compounds are called Stereo Isomers. In this case, we deal with one given species such as the human species which have all the gross features the same but the internal geometric patterns in which the secondary and tertiary elements exist determine the individuality of a particular man and sets him aside from all others of his ilk.

A related concept is isomorphism wherein there is apparent similarity of form between individuals belonging to different races or species. In the field of chemistry it refers to the existence of two or more chemical compounds with the same crystal structure; they differ in chemical composition but have the same crystalline structure. This would be like speaking of the entire human race, or of all the mammals for instance who would exhibit similar external features but have different internal chemistry in the sense that all have their own set of characteristic qualities, virtues and values, their own independent personality, intelligence, emotional quotient etc. Their mental and intellectual setup, their emotional and sentimental quotient, their inherent natural temperaments and inclinations etc. would differ from one individual to another depending upon the combination in which the three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama) exist in them.

In this context, the three Gunas that determine the individual character of the creature, that determine his 'individuality' as compared to the general character of the group to which that individual belongs, are like the isotopes in chemistry. The isotope refers to the phenomenon wherein one of two or more atoms of the same chemical

element that contain the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons in their nuclei and therefore have the same atomic number and chemical properties but different mass numbers and physical properties. For example, two brothers have the same genes and the same inheritance, but the presence of the three Gunas in different ratios between them changes their personality and thought processes. One may be a highly righteous man while the other might be just the opposite. Their parents are the same, their upbringing is the same, they have attended the same school and ate the same food, but there is a deep chasm when it comes to their character as individuals.

The *activities* and *pyramidal* structure of the five elements have been described in *Shaarirako Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 6 as follows—“Word (hearing, sound), touch (feeling), shape and form (sight), taste and smell—these are the five activities which are described as the characteristic virtues displayed by the earth element.

Word (hearing, sound), touch (feeling), shape and form (sight) and taste—these are the four activities which are described as the characteristic virtues displayed by the water element.

Word (hearing, sound), touch (feeling), and shape and form (sight)—these are the three activities which are described as the characteristic virtues displayed by the fire element.

Word (hearing, sound) and touch (feeling)—these are the two activities which are described as the characteristic virtues displayed by the air or wind element.

And word (hearing and sound) is the only one activity which is described as the characteristic virtue displayed by the sky element (6).

[Note—Refer explanation given in verse no. 2. To understand how one element can transform itself into so many forms, we can take the example of *isomerism* in chemistry. The word ‘iso’ means the ‘same’, and ‘meros’ means ‘parts’. Hence, isomerism refers to the phenomenon whereby two or more compounds that are composed of the same chemical formulae, i.e. they have the same molecular composition but different three dimensional structures; they differ in physical or chemical properties. Such things are called ‘isomers’ of the principal element.

Extended further, this phenomenon of isomerism would apply to the concept of the same Atma residing in all the living beings having a mind boggling variety of physical structures, besides the fact that all the creatures have the same Atma as well as the same basic elements as their essential identity.

Then there are two types of isomerism—i.e. *structural isomerism* and *stereo isomerism*. The concept of structural isomerism refer to those isomers which have the same molecular formulae but different structural arrangement of atoms or groups of atoms around the central atom or ion called Structural Isomers and this phenomenon is called structural isomerism. This would be like different species of living organisms which have the same Atma at the core, the same set of fundamental five elements set up around this basic core, and then comes the arrangements of secondary elements around this basic core to give rise to varying structural variations in the species as they evolved. Stereo isomerism is when the same molecular formulae represents two or more compounds which differ in the spatial arrangement of atoms or groups of atoms. Such compounds are called Stereo Isomers. In this case, we deal with one given species such as the human species which have all the gross features the same but the internal geometric patterns in which the secondary and tertiary elements exist determine the individuality of a particular man and sets him aside from all others of his ilk.

A related concept is *isomorphism* wherein there is apparent similarity of form between individuals belonging to different races or species. In the field of chemistry

it refers to the existence of two or more chemical compounds with the same crystal structure; they differ in chemical composition but have the same crystalline structure. This would be like speaking of the entire human race, or of all the mammals for instance who would exhibit similar external features but have different internal chemistry in the sense that all have their own set of characteristic qualities, virtues and values, their own independent personality, intelligence, emotional quotient etc. Their mental and intellectual setup, their emotional and sentimental quotient, their inherent natural temperaments and inclinations etc. would differ from one individual to another depending upon the combination in which the three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama) exist in them.

In this context, the three Gunas that determine the individual character of the creature, that determine his 'individuality' as compared to the general character of the group to which that individual belongs, are like the *isotopes* in chemistry. The isotope refers to the phenomenon wherein one of two or more atoms of the same chemical element that contain the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons in their nuclei and therefore have the same atomic number and chemical properties but different mass numbers and physical properties. For example, two brothers have the same genes and the same inheritance, but the presence of the three Gunas in different ratios between them changes their personality and thought processes. One may be a highly righteous man while the other might be just the opposite. Their parents are the same, their upbringing is the same, they have attended the same school and ate the same food, but there is a deep chasm when it comes to their character as individuals.

The verse clearly outlines the pyramidal structure of the primary elements in creation. The 'earth' being the grossest and heaviest is at the base, while the 'sky' being the subtlest and lightest is at the top, with the rest of the three elements, viz. the 'water', the 'fire' and the 'air' being arranged in an ascending manner clearly show their declining grossness and increasing subtlety.]”

The 8 TATTVAS—According to the definition of Prakriti as described in the standard Sanskrit-English Dictionary of Sir Monier Monier-Williams, M.A., K.C.I.E., the *eight* fundamental Elements or Tattvas are the following—one Avyakta (that supreme entity that is un-manifest and intangible but nevertheless at the basis of everything that exist) + one Buddhi (intellect) + one Ahankar (the inherent nature of having ego and pride) + and five Tanmatras or the subtle bodies consisting of the five sense perceptions, such as the faculties of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting. These are also called the Prakriti or nature of an individual creature at the micro level as well as of the creation at the macro level.

According to the philosophy of Vedanta, these *eight* fundamental Elements or Tattvas in creation are the following—earth, water, fire, wind and sky constituting the gross body of the creature, and the two other subtle elements consisting of the Mana (mind and intellect) and 'Ahankar' (ego, pride) which constitute the subtle body of the creature.

The 9 TATTVAS—The *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 14 says that there are nine Tattvas which are actually subtle revelations of the supreme Brahm. They are the following—The three fundamental Gunas, i.e. the Sata, the Raja and the Tama, the three basic characters of the Atma known as Sat-Chit-Anand, i.e. Sat (truth), Chitta (consciousness) and Anand (bliss), and the three forms of divinity represented by the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Rudra the concluder of creation, represent the nine Tattvas of creation.

The *Par Brahm Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 5 says that the sacred thread that is worn by Brahmins has three main strands, and each strand consists of three sub-strands. The total number of strands thus becomes nine ($3 \times 3 = 9$). These nine strands symbolically represent the nine Tattvas of creation which actually stand for the nine revelations of the same Brahm. The fact that the sacred thread has nine finer strands is also endorsed in the Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 27.

The 16 TATTVAS—The sixteen Tattvas are the following—the five organs of perception (ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin) + the five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + the five Prans (the five subtle forms of the vital winds present inside the body—such as Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Vyan and Udaana) + one Mana (mind) = 16.

The fact that there are sixteen Tattvas is mentioned in *Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Canto 5, paragraph no. 15.

The 17 TATTVAS—The *Shaarirako-panishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 16 describes the seventeen elements of creation at the micro level of creation. To quote—“This verse narrate how the earlier five basic elements of creation mutated and branched out to create more elements. Thus, from these five elements there arose seventeen at the micro level of creation represented by the individual creature.

The body of the creature is called the Linga Deha. It consists of the following seventeen dimensions or units or elements—the five organs of perception (ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin) + the five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + the five Prans (the five subtle forms of the vital winds present inside the body—such as Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Vyan and Udaana) + one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) = seventeen units or elements of creation at the micro level (16).

[Note—These seventeen units or elements of creation are like the secondary elements that came into being as the process of creation moved forward. They formed the gross body of the creature representing the microcosm. Out of these, five gross organs of perception and five gross organs of action form the ten elements or units of creation which are considered comparatively gross in nature. The other seven, i.e. the five winds, one mind and one intellect are the subtle elements or units of creation at the microcosmic level.]

The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, paragraph no. 17 says among other things that the supreme Goddess of creation, i.e. Goddess Tripura who is a manifestation of the dynamism of Brahm, has revealed herself as the seventeen units of creation. The mortal world has come into being from these seventeen units or elements.

The 18 TATTVAS—Reference = (i) Atharva Veda's Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad, verse no. 24; Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph no. 9-10.

The eighteen Tattvas are as follows—Abyakta Mool Prakriti (Primary Nature) + Mahattatva (the Great Tattava from which the rest of the Tattvas evolved) + Ahankar (pride and ego having the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama as its constituent part) + the 5 Tanmatras (perceptions of sight, hearing, smell, taste and feeling) + the 5 organs of perceptions (eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin respectively) + the 5 patron deities of these perceptions = 18.

The *Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 24, describes the creation of the eighteen Tattvas as follows—“Prior to the coming

into being of this creation, there was only one Brahm who prevailed everywhere. In the primary stages of creation, the primary Nature known as Mool Prakriti came into existence from this Brahm. This Prakriti was 'Abyakta', i.e. it was invisible and indefinable. Since this Prakriti emerged from the Akshar (imperishable, that which does not decay) Brahm, it too had the same characteristic feature of being Akshar.

From this Avyakta Prakriti was created Mahattatva (the Great Tattva or the primary element).

From the Mahatattva was created the Ahankar (pride and ego) which was a combination of the three Gunas known as Sata (the best quality), Raja (the medium quality) and Tama (the lowest and meanest quality).

From Ahankar (dominated by the Tamas Guna) were created the five Tanmatras or senses of perception (such as smelling, tasting, hearing, feeling and seeing).

From these were produced the five Maha-Bhuts or the five elements which would act as the building blocks of the rest of the creation.

[These were the sky which was produced from the perception of hearing because sound needed space to travel and heard at a distance, the air which was produced from the perception of feeling as is evident from the fact that we can 'feel' the breeze blowing against our faces inspite of it being invisible, the fire which was produced from the perception of seeing because fire gave light that enabled to the creature to see, the water which was produced from the perception of taste as is evident from the fact that we can taste anything only when its chemicals are dissolved in the water content of the saliva in the mouth, and the earth which was produced from the perception of smelling as is proved by the fact that one smells anything on the surface of the earth, and there is no smell in outer space.]

{Though not mentioned here expressly but it would be however relevant to point out that out of the Ahankar that was dominated by the Sata Guna was created the patron Gods of the five organs of perception, and from the Ahankar dominated by the Raja Guna was created the five organs of perception in the body, such as the ear that hears, the skin that feels, the eye that sees, the tongue that tastes, and the nose that smells.}

In this way, the supreme Brahm, which is primarily Akshar (imperishable and eternal) and Avyakta (invisible and attribute-less) becomes covered or surrounded by so many layers of qualities that it appears to be quite the opposite of what it is supposed to be.

[This is simply because Brahm has not only created everything but also pervades each pore of each unit of this creation; there is nothing in this creation that is not Brahm. Hence, since even the gross and perishable aspects of this creation where the grosser of the five elements dominate, for instance the body of the creature, is a manifestation of Brahm, it gives the illusion that Brahm is gross and perishable. Another instance is of the negative dimensions of creation such as the quality of Ahankar (ego and pride) dominated by the Tama Guna. Brahm is said to be attributes and immaculate, so to say that Brahm has Ahankar would be an absurd proposition, but the fact remains that Ahankar is as much a part and parcel of creation as other positive qualities. In brief, it must be remembered that this creation is a composite of the good and the bad, and this was done by the supreme Creator to maintain a fine balance of power and qualities. He allowed the creation to take its own course, but when he decides to wind up the show he uses the negative qualities to become ascendant so as to neutralize the positive ones, and any further growth of the negative qualities brings about an implosion of the creation and its automatic end.]

The result is that the true form of the supreme transcendental Brahm remains hidden from view. It can be sighted or realised only when a person becomes enlightened and understands that the Atma that drives this creation while remaining hidden from view is the truthful form of Brahm as it possesses all the eclectic qualities known to be characteristics of Brahm, while the rest of the world is the creation that is simply a grosser manifestation of this Atma.] (24).

The *Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 2, paragraph nos. 9-10 describe the 18 Tattvas as follows—Avyakta, Mool Prakriti, Mool Avidya, Sat, Mahatattva, Ahankar, the five Tanmatras, the five Bhuts, Anda or Hiranyagarbh, and Viraat.

“Verse no. 9 = The origin, the development and growth, and the conclusion of the ‘Mool Avidya’, i.e. the primary ignorance that is the cause of all delusions and their horrendous consequences that not only create a web known as the world but also keep the creature trapped in it, corresponds to the opening and closing of the eyes of the cosmic Lord known as Adi-Narayan (the primordial Lord Vishnu who is also known as the Viraat Purush, the Primal Purush). [That is, when the Lord opens his eyes it corresponds to the initiation of creation, when he closes his eyes it corresponds to the conclusion of creation, and the period when he keeps the eyes open corresponds to the intermediary phase of development and growth.]

When the universal Lord Adi-Narayan, who is blissful in his true self and self-contented in every way (‘Atmaram’), so wishes and lifts his eyelids, it is then that the ‘Avyakta’ (the un-manifest, imperceptible and invisible) aspect of creation, called the ‘Mool Prakriti’ (the primary Nature), is created. This Avyakta represents the lower feet of the supreme transcendental Brahm (the cosmic Consciousness) which is the primary cause of all things that have come into existence, and which is expressed in the form of this existence in myriad of ways.

From the Avyakta or Mool Prakriti comes into being the ‘Mool Avidya’ or primary ignorance or the cause of falsehood. [The reason behind calling the entire creation as ‘falsehood’ is that it is an imagination of the mind of the Lord Adi-Narayan, the Primal Purush. It is the latter’s ‘wishful thinking’ so to say, and therefore the creation has no actual existence. The world came into being (existence) because the Supreme Being desired or wished that it be so. If he had not so desired or wished, the creation wouldn’t have been in existence at all. But even the Lord himself was so fascinated and charmed by his own creation once it came into being that for a moment he forgot that it is an imaginary thing created out of his own wishful thinking, and instead began to regard it as the real thing. Hence, the rising of ‘Mool Avidya’ or the primary form of ignorance is regarded as having its base in this imaginary thinking that has its origin in the mind. Once it came into being, it acted as the breeding ground for ‘Maya’ or delusions. This tendency to first imagine something and then treat it as the real thing is known as ‘Mool Prakriti’ or the primary nature of all creatures. This explains why ‘Mool Prakriti’ gave rise to ‘Mool Avidya’—because this ‘primary or basic nature’ to imagine things that do not have substance and any truth in them as the real thing having a truthful form and existence is being ‘ignorant of the reality and the truth’.]

It is from the same ‘Avyakta’ and influenced by the ‘Avidya’ created by it that the entity referred to as ‘Sat’, i.e. an entity that is ‘truthful’ (Sat) but tainted by ‘ignorance’ (Avidya), was produced. This ‘Sat’ is that form of Brahm which is undeniably true but is tainted and corrupted by the influence of Avidya. [This refers to

the next step of creation when Avidya, or lack of knowledge, led to the primarily 'truthful' ('Sat') Brahm that is characterised by being without any attributes and qualifications to acquire certain attributes and qualifications as narrated below. The importance of 'Sat' in this context lies in the fact that though the creation that would now follow as a manifestation of Brahm is outwardly false but it must always be remembered that hidden in this external façade of falsehood is the immortal and immutable 'truth' of creation that is known as 'Brahm'. This Brahm is 'Avyakta' because it is the pure consciousness that is hidden and secretly present in this creation. It is not visible from the outside like the rest of the creation's physical body. The aspect of creation that is visible is the 'Vyakta' form of Brahm, while its invisible aspect is the 'Avyakta' form of Brahm. Since the world is marked by falsehoods and other impurities called the various 'Vikaars' which become imposed or transposed on Brahm for the simple reason that whatever that exists is nothing but Brahm, it logically follows that Brahm itself becomes tainted with the impurities so synonymous with this artificial creation. This creation is riddled with ignorance and artificiality because it is an 'imaginary creation of the mind' in the first place as outlined above. Therefore we conclude that the primary truthful and sublime form of Brahm becomes tainted and corrupted when it gets associated with this gross world and identified in its form.]

From the Avyakta were further created the 'Mahatattva'—the essential virtues ('Tattvas) that granted greatness and magnificence to this creation, and imparted glory ('Mahat') to it and its creator.

From 'Mahat' was created 'Ahankar', or the sense of ego, pride and vanity (which created arrogance and haughtiness). [The link is obvious. When one has some 'Mahat' or a sense of grandeur, majesty or greatness, it is natural that 'Ahankar' would be produced in its wake, and this would eventually subdue him.]

From Ahankar was created the five 'Tanmatras' or the five sense perceptions. [The five Tanmatras are the perceptions of sound or words, touch, smell, taste and sight. When the primary consciousness representing the creature felt 'proud', or had Ahankar in it that it is enabled and empowered to live a life independently and has been given a body that has magnificent capabilities, it decided that it can hear, touch, smell, taste and see various things and interpret them or make sense of them. Thus were created the five Tanmatras of the creature's body in which the Atma or the pure consciousness lived as his true 'self'.]

From the five Tanmatras were created the five Bhuts such as the sky etc. [The five Bhuts are the five primary elements of creation such as the sky, air, fire, water and earth. This is because to 'hear' there must be a sound, and sound needs 'sky or space' to travel and the medium of 'air' to be transported in the form of waves. Further, it was in the cosmic ether that the first waves were created that produced 'sound'. Similarly for example, 'water' was needed to 'taste' something as the chemicals present in anything tasted needed a medium to dissolve and interact with each other to generate the sense of taste. And so on and so forth.]

From these five Bhuts or primary elements there came into being an 'Anda'—or the 'cosmic egg'. [This 'Anda' or the cosmic egg represented a grosser form that resulted when all these primary elements of creation interacted with each other; the Anda was a result of this interaction. It is like the case of the male sperm fertilising the female ova to produce the egg from which develops the embryo which in turn metamorphoses into a complex creature with a gross, visible and physical body that has no resemblance to the original inputs of the sperm and the ova which are in themselves very microscopic in form.]

This primary form of creation represents one Paad or feet or aspect of the supreme Brahm. [Therefore, the embryo and the visible world that develops from this cosmic Anda or egg is only one Paad of Brahm. And this Paad is the lower feet of Brahm as already said in stanza 2 of this paragraph. The other Paads of Brahm would therefore represent the vast creation much beyond the known world.] (9).

“verse no. 10 = This cosmic egg (‘Anda’) has the primary Lord known as Narayan as its basic empowering Authority as well as its essential ingredient. This Lord Narayan is primarily beyond all Gunas (i.e. who has no specific attributes and is beyond conventional definitions), is immaculate and pure Truth personified, and is eternally blissful, but he has assumed a form that has attributes and willingly allows himself to be surrounded by Maya (delusions) because he so wishes and wants to display his maverick powers in a playful manner.

In other words, the fact that the primarily formless and attributeless Lord Narayan has allowed himself to be mired by Avidya (ignorance) and Maya (delusions) that led the formation of the cosmic Anda (egg) that would eventually create the Brahmaand (universe) is so because the Lord had willingly wished it to be so. He wanted a little fun and play, and therefore sportingly created this world and its accompanying delusions. [This paragraph describes the cause of this creation coming into being. The cause is the Lord’s desire to do something magical and out of the ordinary; it was due to his ‘wish’. When this happened, the first thing was the appearance of the cosmic ‘egg’ which was the future universe in its primitive, basic and miniature form. This cosmic egg was the ‘causal body’ of Brahm because it contained or harboured ‘the spark of life in the form of consciousness’. It was ‘causal’ because it acted as the ‘cause’ of the universe taking shape and coming into being. Hence, Brahm resided in this cosmic Anda as its Atma or soul. Had it not been for the presence of Brahm in it, the cosmic egg would be like any other ‘unfertilised egg’ which does ‘not’ harbour life. And even if this ‘unfertilised egg’ grew and somehow matured into the shape of the universe, the latter would not have harboured life either because of the absence of Brahm or consciousness in it. This lifeless universe would be without an Atma.]

Lord Narayan is none else but Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness that is behind everything in existence. Since the cosmic ‘Anda’ or egg harbours the future world in its bosom, it is sure to have the spark of ‘life and consciousness’ in it, for otherwise it would be inane and dead. So it is said that Narayan (symbolising ‘life’ and ‘consciousness’) is uniformly present in this cosmic egg as its vital ingredient; this cosmic egg is completely soaked in life and consciousness which are manifestations of Adi-Narayan; the cosmic egg is therefore a manifestation of Adi-Narayan. [This ‘Adi-Narayan’ is a term used to imply the Primal Purush from whom the entire gamut of creation has emerged. He is variously regarded as being the supreme Brahm who is un-manifest cosmic Consciousness that is all-pervading, all-encompassing and beyond any limitations imposed by definitions, as well as Lord Vishnu who resides in Vaikunth, and who is variously named as Narayan, Parmatma, Viraat Purush and Hiranyagarbha. Refer Canto 1, paragraph 5-6.]

The egg therefore has the supreme Lord concealed in it in a subtle form. This Lord is the cause of countless universes coming into being, their sustenance and their conclusion. He is the primary cause of all causes, i.e. he is personified Prakriti or Nature. He is beyond the reach and purview of Maya or delusions, though Maya is created by him and he has allowed himself to be surrounded by Maya in order to create this creation. He is a personified state of consciousness known as Turiya, which

is the state of existence which is transcendental in form and nature. It is this supreme and majestic Lord who resides subtly and imperceptibly in the cosmic egg (Anda) described here. [According to Vedanta, this form of Brahm is known as 'Hiranyagarbha', and is also called 'Brahma, the creator'. It is so because from this egg the rest of the creation would eventually evolve. So, Hiranyagarbha is the subtle body of Brahm at the cosmic level of creation. The subtle body consists of the twin instruments of the mind and the intellect which are required to undertake the complex task of creation. This is symbolised by Brahma, the creator, as he is said to have pronounced the Vedas which are the eternal repositories of knowledge and wisdom. It was the creative and imaginative aspect of the cosmic 'mind' that visualised what shape this universe would take, and it was the intelligent and sharp cosmic 'intellect' that actually researched and gave effect to the imaginary conceptions of the mind. Hence, Brahma the creator is regarded as the macrocosmic 'subtle body' of creation. He is also like the cosmic egg because it was he who had given this creation its shape just like the body of a creature is given its shape inside the shell of the egg even before it hatches.]

From this evolves the 'Viraat Purush' which is the 'gross body' of the supreme transcendental Brahm at the macrocosmic level of creation. It is this Viraat Purush from which the rest of creation has emerged. Only a body that has 'life' and 'consciousness' in it is adored and shown attention by all; it is such a body that does not decay and perish. Once the factors of life and consciousness leave the body, it begins to decay and perish rapidly. Hence, this shows that the 'imperishable and eternal' Brahm in the form of the 'cosmic Consciousness' has himself revealed in the form of the Viraat Purush at the macrocosmic level of creation, and by extension in the form of the individual creature that this Viraat transforms into at the microcosmic level of creation. [The Viraat Purush is the sum-total of all the gross bodies in creation. All things that have a shape and form are created from the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm known as the Viraat Purush. In other words, what the individual creature is to Brahm at the microcosmic level of creation, the Viraat Purush bears the same relationship with Brahm at the macrocosmic level of creation. The 'gross body' has various sense organs or perceptions and actions—so when this Viraat transformed himself as a living being, the latter also depicted these sense organs. They are his five organs of perception such as the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue and the skin, and the five organs of action such as the hand, the leg, the mouth, the genitals and the excretory.]

Therefore we conclude that it is the same Brahm in the form of the cosmic Consciousness that is at the core of life and creation at all levels of its evolution, such as the causal body, the subtle body and the gross body (10)."

The 19 TATTVAS—These nineteen *Tattvas* or essential elements or units or dimensions or aspects of this creation are the following— five organs of perception + five organs of action + five 'Prans' or vital winds + four 'Antahakarans'. The five organs of perception are ear, nose, eyes, tongue and skin. The five organs of action are hand, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory organs. The five vital winds are 'Pran' (breath; the essential vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life), 'Apan', 'Uddan', 'Samaan' and 'Vyan'. The four 'Antahakarans' are the mind, intellect, the various 'Vasanas' and the soul. The word 'Vasana' means worldly passions, lust, greed and desires.

(ii) The group of 'essential elements of life' are actually considered twenty-nine in number as follows —nineteen 'Tattavas' listed in s. no. 1 above + five

perceptions + five signs of life. The five subtle perceptions are smell, speech, touch, taste and sight. The five signs of life are the gross elements such as blood, urine, stool, mucous and wind present in the body.

The 23 TATTVAS—According to Tantra philosophy, this creation came into being by the union of Shiva and Shakti. This created the twenty three elements or Tattvas as follows—one Mahat + one Ahankar + the ten sense organs called the Indris (five organs of perception—ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin, and five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + one Mana (mind) + the five subtle elements called the Tanmatras (the senses of perception—sight, smell, sound, taste and touch) + the five gross elements called Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air and sky) = 23 total.

The 24 TATTVAS—Reference = (i) Purans—Harvansha Puran, 14840; Mahabharat, xii, 11242; Vishnu Puran, Chapter 1, Canto 2, verse nos. 33-51. (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda's Mantriko-panishad, verse no. 15.

When Shakti (cosmic energy) is added to the twenty three Tattvas of the *Tantra philosophy*, the total becomes $23 + 1 = 24$ Tattvas.

The twenty-four Tattvas are the following—1 Mahat or Maya + 1 Ahankar + the 10 sense organs called the Indris (five organs of perception—ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin, and five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + 1 Mana (mind) + the 5 subtle elements called the Tanmatras (the senses of perception—sight, smell, sound, taste and touch) + the 5 gross elements called Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air and sky) + 1 Shakti (cosmic dynamic energy) = 24 Tattvas.

The *Mantriko-panishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 15, outlines the twenty-four Tattvas as follows—“Some scholars regard the supreme Purush as being an embodiment of all the twenty-four ‘Tattvas’ (essential elements or principles of creation) combined, some regard him as a ‘Vyakta’ entity (i.e. that which is revealed in the form of the visible world; that which is manifest and discernible), while there are some others who treat him as ‘Avyakta’ (i.e. that which is invisible, un-manifest and imperceptible but nevertheless all-pervading, ubiquitous and universal. [It ought to be noted here that the concept of Prakrit is intricately woven into the fabric of creation and conforms to both the views of Avyakta (un-manifest) and Vyakta (manifest). At the subtle level, Prakriti is Avyakta, while at the gross level it is Vyakta. The word would also therefore have two applications. See note.]

There are some who treat him as being of a ‘dual nature’ (such as a Jiva or a living creature and the supreme Brahm or the transcendental Lord from whom the entire creation originated), while others treat him as ‘non-dual’ in essence (i.e. they regard the entire creation as nothing but one or the other revelation of Brahm; they regard everything as Brahm; there is nothing that is not Brahm)³.

Similarly, some regard him as having three forms as the Trinity Gods (i.e. as Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder), while there are some who treat him as having ‘five forms’ (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Shakti representing the cosmic energy and power of creation, sustenance and destruction, and Ganesh who is regarded as the most revered God and is worshipped first during any religious ceremony to overcome any hurdles for he is the patron God for success and achievements in any endeavour) (15).

According to *Harvansha Puran*, 14840, and *Mahabharat*, xii, 11242, there are *twenty-four* basic elements or Tattwas. These twenty-four fundamental Elements or Tattwas are the essential ingredients which go in to make up the body of a creature, and they are—(a) Prakriti (nature, inherent tendencies and inclinations, the fundamental truth about anything that decide its character and existential mode); (b) Buddhi (intellect, wisdom, discrimination); (c) Ahankar (pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness); (d) the eleven organs (five organs of perceptions—eye, ear, nose, skin and tongue; five organs of action—hands, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory; one organ of intelligence—mind); and (e) the five vital Prans (the vital winds that regulate life in a creature—Pran or the life giving breath, Apaana or the wind which passes down the intestines and regulates digestion and excretion, Samaana or the wind that helps in even distribution of nourishment in the body, Vyan or the wind that maintains equilibrium in the body, and Udaana or the wind that helps to rise); and (f) the five perceptions (sight, touch, smell, taste and hearing) bringing the total to = $1+1+1+1+1+5+5 = 24$.

The 25 TATTVAS—The *Maha Upanishad* of Sam Veda, in its Canto 1, verse nos. 4-6 gives a list of the twenty-five Tattvas in the specific sequence as follows—the five sense organs of perception (eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin) [these are the 1st five Tattvas] + the five sense organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, excretory and reproductive) [these are the 2nd five Tattvas] + one Mana (mind) [this is the 11th Tattva] + one Ahankar (pride and ego) [this is the 12th Tattva] + one Pran (vital airs or life-giving winds) [this is the 13th Tattva] + one Atma (consciousness) [this is the 14th Tattva] + one Buddhi (intellect) [this is the 15th Tattva] + the five Tanmatras (the five subtle senses of perception such as seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching) [these are the 16th to 20th Tattvas] + the five primary elements called the Panch Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air and sky) [these form the 21st to 25th Tattvas] = total twenty five Tattvas. [$5 + 5 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 5 + 5 = 25$.]

Atharva Veda's *Narad Parivrajak Upanishad*, Canto 6, verse no. 2, enumerates the twenty-five Tattwas as follows—"The subtle body has twenty-five components or parts or organs called the Tattwas (elements), and they are the following—the five perceptions (of smell, sight, hearing, taste and touch), the five faculties of action (accepting, going, speaking, sensual or sexual awareness and the desire to excrete or eliminate waste), the five Prans (i.e. the vital winds or airs that sustain life inside the body—Pran or breath, Apaana, Samaana, Vyan and Udaana), the five objects of perception (things seen, things heard, things smelt, things tasted and things felt), the four Antahakarans (i.e. the four aspects of the inner self which are Mana or mind, Buddhi or intellect, Chitta or sub-conscious, and Ahankar or ego), and one un-manifest Prakriti (or the latent, hidden but inherent nature and temperament of a creature). [Refer also to Mahopanishad, 1/4 – 6 of Sam Veda tradition.]"

The *Shaarirako-panishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 18-20, describes the twenty five elements of creation at the macro level of creation. To quote—"The five gross organs of perception present in the body such as the ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose make up the five gross units or elements of creation at the micro level of the body of the creature. [Total 5 organs of perception.]

Then there are the five organs of action such as the anus, genital, hand, leg and speech (mouth). These are the five gross organs which add their count to the number of elements or units or dimensions that exist in this creation at the micro level. [Total 5 organs of action.]

Besides these, there are the five subtle sense perceptions such as the perceptions of hearing (relevant to the ear), feeling or touching (relevant to the skin), seeing various forms and shapes (relevant to the eye and the faculty of sight), taste (relevant to the tongue) and smell (relevant to the nose). [Total 5 senses of perception.]

Thus the tally comes to twenty three elements of creation as follows—8 Vikaars¹ + 5 organs of perceptions² + 5 organs of action³ + 5 senses of perceptions⁴ = total 23 (18-19).

The twenty fourth element or unit or dimension of creation is said to be the invisible and un-manifest cosmic Nature. [This brings the tally to 23 + 1 = 24.]

And finally, there is the ultimate chief Authority of creation, called the supreme Purush, the Supreme Being, who forms the last unit of creation. This entity is immutable and indivisible, it is non-dual and eternal, it is infinite and imperishable, and it is all-pervading, all-incorporating and all-encompassing. Therefore there is nothing beyond it to count; it is the final frontier; there is nothing that exists beyond it that can be counted as an independent entity superseding the Chief Purush.

Thus we come to the total tally of twenty five elements. [The tally is arrived as follows—23 elements + 1 invisible and un-manifest cosmic Nature called Prakriti + 1 Supreme Being called Brahm or the Viraat Purush = total 25 elements.]

In this way, the entire universe or cosmos is made up of twenty five elements.”

[Note—¹The eight Vikaars according to verse no. 17 of the Shaarirak Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, they are the following— They are the following—one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) + one Ahankar (pride and arrogance) + one Akash element + one air element + one fire element + one water element + one earth element = total of eight elements that cast their shadow on the purity of Nature (just like the shadow of the earth casts its shadow on the bright moon to result in the lunar eclipse).

²The five organs of perception are the following—ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin.

³The five organs of action are the following—hand, leg, mouth, genitals and excretory.

⁴The five perceptions are the following—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching.]

According to *Sankhya Shastra*, there are twenty-five fundamental Elements or Tattvas as follows—one Avyakta (the un-manifest entity known as Prakriti or cosmic Nature) + one Buddhi (intellect, wisdom, discrimination) + one Ahankar (the inherent ego and pride that is integral to all the creatures) + five Tanmatras (senses—sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste) + eleven organs (five organs of perception—eye, ear, nose, skin and tongue respectively + five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genital) + one Purush (the macrocosmic Consciousness; the cosmic Self or Atma or Soul; the Male aspect of creation; the Viraat Purush who is all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent, eternal, infinite, un-manifest and almighty Lord of creation; the macrocosmic gross body of creation).

There is another version as to what constitutes the twenty-five Tattvas. They are the following—Purush (the primal cosmic Male; the Viraat Purush), Prakriti (primal Nature), Mahtattva (the powerful Buddhi or intellect), Ahankar (ego, pride), the five organs of perception (i.e. the eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin), the five organs of action (i.e. the hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genitals), the Mana (mind), the five perceptions (such as the spoken word or speech, sight, smell, touch and taste), the five Bhuts (i.e. the five primary elements, the earth, water, fire, air and space or sky) = 25.

The 26 TATTVAS—According to *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, Brahman 1, section 4, verse no. 3, and *Mantriko-panishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 14 there are twenty-six Tattvas.

The twenty-sixth Tattwa or element is ‘Hiranyagarbha’, the cosmic subtle body of creation, or the cosmic golden egg from which Viraat had emerged.

According to *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, Brahman 1, section 4, verse no. 3, the calculation is as follows—the twenty-three elements such as 1 Mahat or Maya + 1 Ahankar + the 10 sense organs called the Indris (five organs of perception—ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin, and five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + one Mana (mind) + the 5 subtle elements called the Tanmatras (the senses of perception—sight, smell, sound, taste and touch) + the 5 gross elements called Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air and sky) + Shakti (cosmic dynamic energy) = 24 Tattvas**. The 25th Tattva is the Jiva, the living being who has consciousness pulsating inside his gross body, and the 26th Tattva is the Parmatma or Iswar, the Supreme Being, the Supreme Atma which is the cosmic Consciousness. [**The twenty-four Tattvas have also been described in *Vishnu Puran*, Chapter 1, Canto 2, verse nos. 33-51.]

According to the philosophy of *Patanjali's Yoga Darshan*, there are twenty-six Tattvas. Besides the twenty-five Tattvas of the Sankhya philosophy, this also includes the Ishwar or the Supreme Being as the twenty-sixth element.

The *Mantriko-panishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 14, describes the twenty-six Tattvas as follows—“Some wise ones call the supreme Purush as a personification of the twenty-sixth ‘Tattwa’ (essential element or principle), while others call him as representing the twenty-seventh. Those who are expert in the Atharva-shir (Upanishad) regard that supreme Purush as being ‘Nirgun Sankhya Purush¹’ (i.e. the supreme transcendental Lord who has no attributes and forms, and who has been expounded by the Sankhya philosophy) (14).

[Note—¹The word *Nirgun* means one without any qualities, characters and attributes. This is because the supreme Lord is so subtle, sublime and enigmatic that all definitions fall short of even defining a fraction of his true form and nature. He is the one who has created everything, both the truthful ones as well as the false ones, and the magical part is that he is the ‘spirit’ of all of them—i.e. even those things that are false, such as the mirage seen in a hot desert, have their existence and the quality of being ‘false’ because that enigmatic *Purush* is subtly present in those false things as their quality of ‘falsehood and illusion’. If this is true for those things that are false, then obviously those things that are actually there, those which are actually ‘true’ are definitely empowered and vested with the stupendous glories of that ‘truthful Purush’.]”

The 27 TATTVAS—The *twenty-seventh* Tattwa or Element is known as ‘Ishwar’, the macrocosmic causal body of creation. Obviously, all these elements are junior to the primary source called the Supreme Being or Brahm. Therefore, the Supreme Being or Brahm is neither the creature nor the Purush; he is neither the visible world nor the invisible creation taken independently. He is beyond such limiting definitions. Therefore, he has certain qualities that do not fall within the ambit of ordinary creation; he has some extraordinary elements that are beyond the realm of comprehension.

The *Par Brahm Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 5 describes how the sacred thread worn by Brahmins or Sanyasis represents the *twenty-seven Tattwas* of creation. To quote—“The three strands of the sacred thread

symbolize the three basic Gunas that determine the fundamental character of all units of creation (i.e. Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna), the three invisible forms of Brahm known as the Trinity Gods at the macrocosmic level (i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva which have these three Gunas as their dominant characteristics—refer Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 10), and the three visible forms of Brahm at the celestial level such as the sun, the moon and the fire. These three aspects of Brahm are intertwined with one another; they cannot be separated one from the other in order to maintain the texture of the fabric of creation intact. Hence, these represent the twenty-seven elements or Tattwas of creation that the sacred thread represents. [$3 \times 3 \times 3 = 27$.]”

The 32 TATTVAS—In the context of the philosophy of Vedanta, the thirty-two elements are the following— the 5 Bhuts (primary elements such as sky, air, fire, water and earth in order of decreasing subtlety and increasing grossness) + the 5 Tanmatras (sense perceptions of smell, taste, touch/feeling, hearing/sound and sight/seeing) + the 10 sense organs (the 5 organs of perception such as nose, tongue, skin, ear, eye + the 5 organs of action such as hand, leg, mouth, excretory, genitals) + the 4 Anthakarans (Mana or mind, Buddhi or intellect, Chitta or sub-conscious, Ahankar or pride and ego) + 1 Pran (vital wind that sustains life) + 1 Atma (the conscious self of the individual Jiva or living being) + 1 Parmatma (the supreme cosmic Consciousness known as Iswar, the Lord) + 1 Prakriti (Nature) + 1 Maya (delusions) + 3 Gunas (basic primal qualities that determine the overall characteristics of any single unit of creation; they are Sata Guna which is the best and the most auspicious, the Raja Guna which is the second and motivates one to sustain and protect the creation, to be involved in the world but with a positive outlook, and the Tama which is the third and the lowest of the three and motivates one to be sinful and pervert) = 32 Tattvas.]

The *Par Brahm Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, verse no. 5 describes the metaphysical importance of the symbol of the sacred thread and says that it stands for the ninety-six Tattwas or elements of creation. Since the thread constitutes of three strands which are intertwined, each strand therefore stands for thirty two Tattwas [$96/3 = 32$.]

The 36 TATTVAS—The *Naradparivrajak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 8, verse no. 3 mentions that the Viraat Pranav or the macrocosmic form of Brahm transcends the thirty-six Tattvas, though it does not enumerate which are these.

The thirty-six Tattvas are the following—the 25 Tattvas as described in Shankhya philosophy¹ + 1 Ishwar (of Patanjali’s Yoga Darshan) + the 8 Vikaars or faults + 1 Vyakta (that which is visible and has attributes, i.e. the Sanguna aspect of Viraat Pranav or Brahm) + 1 Avyakta (that which is not visible, not having any attributes and characteristics, i.e. the Nirguna aspect of the Viraat Pranav or Brahm) = total 36 Tattvas.

[¹The 25 Tattvas according to the Sankhya philosophy are the following—Purush (the primary Male), Prakriti (Nature), Mahtattva (the powerful Buddhi or intellect), Ahankar (ego, pride), the five organs of perception (i.e. the eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin), the five organs of action (i.e. the hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genitals), the Mana (mind), the five perceptions (such as the spoken word or speech, sight, smell, touch and taste), the five Bhuts (i.e. the five primary elements, the earth, water, fire, air and space or sky) = 25.

²The eight Vikaars according to verse no. 17 of the Shaarirak Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, they are the following—one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) + one Ahankar (pride and arrogance) + one Akash element + one air element + one fire element + one water element + one earth element = total of eight elements that cast their shadow on the purity of Nature.]

The 94 TATTVAS—The *Varaaha Upanishad*, canto 1, verse no. 1 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition mentions that there are *ninety four* Tattwas or elements, but then goes on to say in the same verse that some wise men say that there are actually ninety-six Tattwas instead of ninety-four.

However, first let us see what these ninety-six Tattvas are:-- five organs of perception—eye, ear, nose, skin and tongue + five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genital + the five vital Prans which are the vital winds that regulate life in a creature—Pran or the life giving breath, Apaana or the wind which passes down the intestines and regulates digestion and excretion, Samaana or the wind that helps in even distribution of nourishment in the body, Vyan or the wind that maintains equilibrium in the body, and Udaana or the wind that helps to rise + Mana (mind) + Buddhi (intellect) + Ahankar (ego and a sense of false pride and prestige) + Chitta (sub-conscious and memory) + five Maha-Bhuts—earth, water, fire, air, space + the three types of bodies of the creature—gross, subtle and causal + the three states of existence of the consciousness—waking/Jagrat, dreaming/Swapna and deep sleep/Sushupta + the union or interaction of these thirty five elements produces the collective unit or entity which is called the twenty sixth element + the six faults that are inherent in anything that comes into being—Asti (the notion of existence in present; the concept that anything is there), Jaati (that which is born), Vardhate (that which develops and increases), Parinam (result, fruit), Kshaya (that which is subject to decay) and Naash (destruction and ruin) + the six Urmis or shortcomings—Ashan (hunger), Pipasa (thirst), Shoka (sorrows, grief, sufferings, torments), Moha (attractions, infatuations, delusions, attachments), Jara (old age and weakness), Mritu (death) + the six parts of the gross body—skin, blood, flesh, marrow, abdomen or stomach and bones + the six enemies—Kaam (lust, passions, desires and yearnings), Krodh (anger, indignation), Lobh (greed, rapacity), Moha (attraction, infatuations, attachments, delusions and ignorance), Mada (arrogance, false pride, hypocrisy) and Matsarya (envy, jealousy, malice) + the three states in which the living creature interacts with the surrounding world resulting in them being identified by different names—Vishwa corresponding to the waking state of consciousness, Taijas corresponding to the dreaming state of consciousness, and Pragya corresponding to the deep sleep state of consciousness + the three types of inherent qualities that decide the basic character of an individual—Sata or the best and the noblest of the three, Raja or the medium quality, and Tama or the meanest and lowest quality + the three types of deeds—those done in the past, those done in the future, and those which are being done in the present + the five actions—speak, accept, go, to expel or discard or eliminate, and enjoy and have bliss + the four functions of the mind—Sankalps (make determinations and volitions; to make vows and promises; have firm aspirations), Adhyavasaaya (to remain in a state of constant flux and activity), Abhiman (pride), Avadharana (to have firmness of views, certainties, determined mind, deduction), Mudit (to be happy and exhilarated), Karuna (compassionate, mercy, pity, empathy), Maitri (friendship, brotherhood) and Upeksha (dispassion, disinterest, neglect, indifference) + the celestial Gods representing the various forces of Nature—the directions, Vayu (the Wind God), Sun God, Pracheta (Prajapati, the guardian of

mortal creation), Ashwini Kumars (the twin sons of the Sun god and the physician of the Gods), Agni (Fire God), Indra (the king of Gods), Upendra (Vishnu), Mritu (the Death God; Yam), Chandrama (the Moon God), Brahma (the creator), Rudra (one of the angry forms of Shiva), Kshetrageya (custodian of a particular realm or area; the different custodians of the creation), and Ishwar (the supreme transcendental Lord or Brahm) = total is *ninty four* elements or Tattwas.

The 96 TATTVAS—refer: (i) Krishna Yajur Veda = Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 2-14. (ii) Atharva Veda = Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 14-15; Par Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 5.

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda describes the 96 Tattvas elaborately in Canto 1, verse nos. 2-14. Let us see what these 96 Tattvas are—

“Verse no. 2 = I shall now narrate for you in a sequential form the various Tattvas (essential principles) of that eclectic Brahm Vidya (knowledge pertaining to Brahm). Listen carefully¹.

The Gyan Indris, i.e. the organs of perception, are five—viz. the one with which sound is heard, i.e. the ears; the one with which anything is felt, i.e. the skin; the one with which anything is seen, i.e. the eye etc. [The others being the one with which anything is smelt, i.e. the nose; and the one with which anything is tasted, i.e. the tongue.] (2).

[Note—¹Since the entire creation is a visible manifestation of Brahm, it follows that by understanding the basic Tattvas that constitute the fundamental units of the body of knowledge concerning Brahm, one would be able to get an idea of what really the creation is made up of, and what actually determines the overall character, nature and temperament of this creation as whole as well as of its individual units.]

“verse no. 3 = Similarly, the organs of action are five in number—viz. the one related to speech (i.e. the mouth); the hand (which accepts and does deeds), the legs (which is concerned with movement) etc. [The other two are—anus concerned with excretion, and genitals that are concerned with procreation.]

The vital winds, called Vayu, are also five in number—such as Pran (breath), Apaana (wind that moves down in the intestines) etc. [The other three being Udaan responsible for lifting the body, Vyan responsible for maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and Samaan responsible for equal distribution of nutrients and blood circulation.]

The Tanmatras (the subtle senses of perception) are also five in number—viz. hearing of words (as done by the ears); feeling anything touched (as done by the skin); seeing anything and perceiving its colours, shape, size and contours (as done by the eye); tasting anything (as done by the tongue); and smelling anything or perceiving anything by the virtue of its smell in all its variations—frangrances, scents, perfumes or even stinks etc. (as done by the nose) (3).

[Note—Refer Panch Brahm Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

“verse no. 4 = The next set of four Tattvas are the following—Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Ahankar (sense of ego, pride, arrogance, haughtiness and vanity), and Chitta (sub-conscious mind; memory and conscience).

So the entities mentioned above are called the twenty four Tattvas by those who are well versed in the knowledge of Brahm (4).

[Note—The Tattvas counted are from verse nos. 2-4 as follows— $5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 4 = 24$.]

“verse no. 5 = There are five Maha Bhuts (the great primary elements of creation) also like these twenty four Tattvas. These five are the following—earth, water, fire or energy, wind or air, and sky or space (5).

“verse no. 6 = The body of a creature has been divided into three principle types—viz. gross, subtle and causal. This fact is known by wise and expert persons.

Similarly, there are three principle states of existence—viz. Jagrat or waking state, Swapna or dreaming state, and Sushupta or deep sleep state (6).

[Note—These concepts have been elaborately described in a separate appendix dealing with the concepts of Vedanta at the end of this volume.

Briefly, the three aspects of the body are the following—The gross body is the external part of the physical body consisting of the five organs of perception such as eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin, and the five organs of action such as hands, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory. The subtle component of this body is the mind-intellect complex which plays an intermediary role between the creature and the external world. And finally there is the causal body which harbours the pure conscious Atma that is the ‘cause’ of the existence of the creature’s life inside this body and the ‘cause’ of the existence of the world at large.

The three states of existence of this conscious Atma are the following—Jagrat state is the state of wakefulness when the creature remains physically active in this material world of sense objects, perceiving its inputs with the sense organs of perception as listed above, and reacting with the sense organs of action. The Swapna state is when the external gross body is asleep but the subtle body consisting of the sub-conscious mind is very much active; this is the period when one dreams. Finally, there is the state when even the sub-conscious mind goes to sleep, i.e. when there is no dream. This state of consciousness goes beyond the dreaming state and is called Sushupta literally meaning asleep in the true sense when the consciousness has no feelings or senses left in it.]

“verse no. 7 = Oh wise sage! The above mentioned Tattvas come to a total of thirty five¹.

Their composite form (which has revealed itself as this creation) is the thirty sixth Tattva² (7).

[Note--¹The 35 Tattvas are arrived as follows—24 Tattvas (till verse no. 4) + 5 (verse no. 5) + 3 types of bodies + 3 states of conscious existence (verse no. 6) = 35.

²The product created by the interaction and numerous combinations of these thirty five Tattvas in various ratios and permutations is distinct from any one Tattva, more than one Tattvas or all the Tattvas taken together. There is no resemblance between the units that are used to build the structure and the final shape that it takes, though the structure would fundamentally be known on the basis of its constituent parts. This finished product, which is at variance from its constituent units, is in the nature of an independent Tattvas, hence it is the 36th Tattva.]

“verse no. 8 = All those things that take a birth (and therefore die or perish, and hence are mortal and non-eternal and transitory) have six inherent faults or shortcomings of perception in them.

These faults are the following—(i) That there is an ‘Asti’—i.e. to be in existence. [This is a major fault because whatever that exists in this world is an illusion created by the mind just like the existence of water seen in a desert mirage,

ghost in the dark, a serpent in the rope, change in the moon's surface during the lunar cycle, two or more suns when seen as an image in more than one mirror, the sun or moon being devoured by some imaginary demon during eclipses, the rising or setting of the moon or the sun, etc. There is another interpretation of the term 'existence'—it is the existence of 'duality', the conception that there are two independent entities such as the Jiva or the living creature and the Parmatma or the Supreme Being, or the conception of 'you' and 'me', or 'this' and 'that'. This is against the fundamental tenet of Vedanta which lays stress on 'non-duality' of everything which briefly states that whatever that exists is but one single non-dual Brahm revealed in that form. Therefore, the concept of 'Asti' has an erroneous, a fallacious and ill-conceived foundation. Anything founded on errors of perception or misjudgment is bound to be faulty, distorted, and away from the reality and truth.

(ii) That there is a 'Jaati'—i.e. birth. This relates to the conception that there is a birth and that things are freshly born or reborn again. [This is a fault also because of two reasons. One, if anything does not exist as asserted by the first clause, then the question of its being born or dying does not arise. And two, even if we were to treat everything as Brahm personified—because it would be difficult to deny things physically seen and witnessed—then it is forgotten that Brahm does not take a birth, for it is eternal, infinite, imperishable and the 'one without a birth'. Therefore this very conception of having a birth has no sound footing; it is faulty. It is an upshot of faulty perception of the reality of Brahm and Truth.]

(iii) That there is a 'Vardhan'—i.e. there is increase, enhancement, expansion, growth. This relates to the conception that an entity increases, enhances, grows or develops. [This is a fault because for one, 'truth' never grows and develops, it is always constant, universal, uniform and never changing; and two, 'Brahm' also does not grow or enhance or develop or in any way change because it is the ultimate Truth in creation, and 'Truth' does not change.]

(iv) That there is a 'Parinaam'—i.e. result or consequence or effect or sequel. This relates to the conception that there is a sequel, a consequence, an affect, an upshot, an outcome, a result, a follow up or a fruit of certain deed that was done in the past. [This arises out of the fundamental error that one is the doer of anything, that therefore there is a consequence, a result or sequel of that deed—either good or bad—which cannot be avoided and must be either enjoyed or suffered. This is a fundamental error of conception because one is not a doer of anything because all deeds are done by the physical body which is not the 'self' of the person, for this 'self' is the pure consciousness called the Atma that lives as a distinct entity inside the body as its resident. Further, since there is no truth in what is seen in this world, the question of there being a birth, development and an end does not arise, and consequentially the question of anything being a Parinaam of any deed done in the past life also does not arise.]

(v) That there is a 'Kshaya/Kchaya'—i.e. decay and decline. This relates to the conception that there is a stage called the last stage when there is decay and decline. [This is an error arising out of the pervious errors because anything that is eternal, infinite, imperishable and truthful, for instance Brahm, never decays or declines, nor does anything that really does not exist, like this illusionary world, can ever decay or decline. It is all imaginary, delusory and false.]

(vi) That there is a 'Naash'—i.e. destruction and ruin. This relates to the conception that there is finally destruction or termination. [This fault is a derivative of the earlier faults.] (8).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 42 as follows—36 Tattvas (counted till verse no. 7) + 6 Tattvas (verse no. 8) = 42.]

“verse no. 9 = The six Urmis or faults of the body are the following—(i) ‘Ashan’ or hunger, the need to eat, and therefore the need for food (along with all the accompanying problems such as worrying about its production, safety, storage, procurement, cooking, proper digestion etc.); (ii) Pipaasa or thirst, and the desire to drink and therefore the need for liquids to quench the thirst (which create the same sort of problems that are associated with the need for food; (iii) Shoka or grief, distress and dismay (which have a profound negative impact on the overall mental, psychological and general metabolic health of the body); (iv) Moha or to have strong attractions or longing for anything or anyone, to be emotionally attached with anything, to be deluded, to be held under magical spell of anything or to be under its charm, to hallucinate as a result of these emotional faults (all of which makes a man a virtual serf of his emotions and tied down to the object of his adoration, thereby robbing him of his independence and peace, and more often than not becoming the cause of his interminable sufferings); (v) Jara or old age and its attendant decline of the body leading to its decrepit and weakened physical state when the body loses its strength, vigour and stamina, thereby becoming a burden on the person; and finally (vi) Mritu or death of the body. All these factors create an immense amount of discomfort and horrors to the person (i.e. to the Atma that is the true identity of the person) to whom this body belongs. [In other words, as long as the person continues to have the erroneous conception that this body is

Then there are six Koshas or coverings or structural features of the body. Now I shall tell you about them. [The Koshas are listed in verse no. 10 and also described in a separate appendix dealing with the concepts of Vedanta at the end of this volume.] (9).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 54 as follows—42 Tattvas (as counted till verse no. 8) + 6 Urmis + 6 Koshas (of verse no. 9) = 54.]

“verse no. 10 = The Koshas (mentioned in verse no. 9 above) are the following—skin, blood, flesh, stomach or abdomen, marrow and bones. [As would be evident, these are the components of the gross body of the creature.]

The other six Tattvas relate to the natural habits and temperaments of the creature—such as Kaam (lust, passions, desires and yearnings), Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness, ill-temper), Lobh (greed, rapacity), Moha (attraction, infatuations, attachments, delusions and ignorance), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, false pride, hypocrisy and ego) and Matsarya (envy, jealousy, malice and ill-will). These are the faults associated with his natural temperament and the state of his mind. (10).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 60 as follows—54 Tattvas (as counted till verse no. 9) + 6 Tattvas (of verse no. 10) = 60.]

“verse no. 11 = These six faults in a person’s character (mentioned in verse no. 10) are called his natural Dushmans or enemies.

There are three types of world that the Jiva lives in. They pertain to the three states in which the consciousness exists in this world. They are (i) Vishwa (the gross world as the individual creature perceives it in its waking state of consciousness), (ii) Taijas (the gross world as the individual creature perceives it in its dreaming state of

consciousness), and (iii) Pragya (the gross world as the individual creature perceives it in its deep sleep state of consciousness).

Then there are three types of Gunas or characteristics qualities that are inherent in all living beings which decide his basic nature, temperament and personality traits. These are (i) Sata Guna (the best trait or virtue which is marked by auspicious values), (ii) Raja Guna (which is the medium quality marked by the worldly desires for enjoyment, development and growth), and (iii) Tama (which is the lowest and meanest quality marked by the propensity for being pervert, committing errors, making sins and doing mischief and misdeeds) (11).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 66 as follows—60 Tattvas (as counted till verse no. 10) + 3 states of existence of the Jiva + 3 Gunas (of verse no. 11) = 66.]

“verse no. 12 = There are said to be three types of Karma or deeds—(i) Praarabdha—deed that is obligatory because of the cumulative effects of one’s past life and the latent desires, passions and temperaments that are brought forward from it, inspiring and compelling a person to behave in a certain way and do certain deeds and take actions which his own sibling would abhor; this compulsion is obtained as an inheritance from the past, and over which one has no or least control; (ii) Aagamyā—deed that would be needed to be done in the future and about which no idea can be had at the present time, but it may or may not be as result of the present or the past; and (iii) Arjit—that which is done in the present at a given point of time, and which results in the creation and accumulation of effects that would have bearing on the future.

There are five more Tattvas as follows—(i) Vachan—to promise and make vows; (ii) Aadaan—to receive and accept, to come; (iii) Gaman—to go and give; (iv) Visarjan—to distribute and disperse, to dispense and expel, to eliminate and discharge; and (v) Anand—bliss, ecstasy, happiness and joy. [These five Tattvas are variations of the term Karma or deed because they all involve action that the body takes. It is the body of the creature that physically speaks, receives or gives, comes or goes anywhere, eliminates waste from inside it, or enjoys the pleasures and comforts of the sense objects of the material world. The main Principal called the Atma, the pure consciousness that is the truthful identity of the person, is neutral and a resident of this body, and therefore distinct from it. This Atma does not actually and physically do anything, but for all practical purposes it is deemed to be morally responsible and accountable for all the deeds done by the body because it is the ‘Lord’ of the whole setup. Besides this, it happens only till the time the person thinks that the body is his true identity, and therefore he is deemed to be responsible and accountable for what the body does. Should he disassociate himself from the body and treat his ‘self’ as the Atma, he is freed from unwarranted accusations of being a doer of deeds.] (12).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 74 as follows—66 Tattvas (as counted till verse no. 11) + 3 deeds + 5 Tattvas (of verse no. 12) = 74.]

“verse no. 13 = The next set of four Tattvas are the following—(i) Sankalps—to make aspirations, violations, determinations, promises and resolutions; (ii) Adhyvashya—incessant work and enterprise, to continue to do one’s tasks and duties assiduously, to remain busy in doing one’s work and deeds, and not shunning responsibilities, not being lazy and indolent; (iii) Avimaan—to have pride in one’s deeds, abilities and qualities; and (iv) Avadhaaranaa—to have certainty of views, to determine and deduce firmly without having any doubt.

The next set of four Tattvas are the following—(i) Mudit—to be very glad, cheerful, joyous and happy; (ii) Karuna—to be kind, graceful, merciful and compassionate, to have empathy and sympathy; (iii) Maitri—to have friendly disposition; and (iv) Upeksha—to neglect and be indifferent. [These set of four Tattvas are closely related to the Tattvas listed in verse nos. 12-13.] (13).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 82 as follows—74 Tattvas (as counted till verse no. 12) + 4 + 4 Tattvas (of verse no. 13) = 82.]

“verse no. 14 = The following are the divine Gods who constitute the next group of fourteen Tattvas—The patron Gods of various directions, Vayu (the Wind God), Surya (the Sun God), Pracheta (Prajapati—one of the ancient forefathers of creation), Ashwinikumars (the physicians of the Gods and the twins sons of the Son God), Agni (the Fire God), Indra (the king of Gods), Upendra (Vishnu), Mrityu (the Death God personified as Yam), Chandra (the Moon God), Brahma (the creator), Rudra (Shiva), Kshetragya (the different Gods of various realms of creation), and Ishwar (the Supreme Being; the Lord God) (14).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 96 as follows—82 Tattvas (as counted till verse no. 13) + 14 Gods (of verse no. 14) = 96.]”

The *Par Brahm Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 5 says that the sacred thread worn by a Brahmin represents the ninety six Tattwas of creation.

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THE TRIUMVIRATE OF CREATION

(According to the Upanishads)

Chapter 3

“The Gunas: The Basic Qualities in Creation”

After having studied the different Tattvas, we shall now read about the ‘Gunas’.

The ‘Guna’ literally means a quality or characteristic unique to anything or anybody in this creation. Fundamentally, there are said to be three celebrated Gunas, and they are the following—the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna, and the Tama Guna.

(a) The Sata Guna is the best of the three qualities present in any creature. It is a positive quality and is marked by a propensity for following the path of nobility, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, virtuousness, holiness and righteousness. Creatures that have a predominance of Sata Guna are inclined to do selfless service, be benevolent, merciful, kind and gracious, have coolness of head and a rationale and balanced mind, be contented, have humility and piety etc. Such creatures are devoted to good values in life and have a desire to acquire knowledge that would help them reach higher spiritual goals in life.

This Sata Guna is marked by high standards of ethical and moral existence that makes the bearer of such qualities highly respected in society. Such people have a spiritual dimension to their personality. This quality is spiritually uplifting and gives a divine halo to those who possess it and practice it.

The Vasanas (desires) that have the Sata Guna or quality dominant in them are like a veil covering the lamp or like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satwic desires; its removal requires the least effort.

(b) The second quality is the RAJA GUNA and it makes a man more attracted to this material world and its charms, and less spiritually inclined. The Raja Guna is the medium quality marked by a greater percentage of worldly passions, desires and attachments and their natural offshoots in a creature. It makes a creature inclined towards the material things of the gross world and their enjoyments, towards creation of wealth, its enhancement and protection, and generally having a desire for growth, development and expansion etc. It covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, a stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, a desire to acquire, retain and develop such acquisitions even to the detriment of one’s long term spiritual welfare and even if such actions cause pain to others. All these pertain to this materialistic world. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the Satwic qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being.

The Vasanas that have the Rajsic Guna or quality dominant in them can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with Satwic quality.

(c) The third quality is called the TAMA GUNA and is the meanest and the basest of the three Gunas. It is a demeaning quality in a creature that leads to his downfall and perpetual entanglement with things that are considered improper and unethical. It creates an inclination for committing all sorts of sins, misdeeds and demeanours. It leads the creature towards negativity and inspires him to acquire negative qualities such as various vices, evils, sins, perversions etc. It makes him inclined to be greedy, rapacious, haughty, arrogant, lustful, intoxicated, vile and wild to the extreme. Such a creature with a predominance of Tama Guna has utter disregard for propriety, noble virtues and ethics, for righteousness and morality.

In brief, it is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, and leads to such behaviour which is utterly immoral, denigrating and depraved, marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness. It therefore leads to his downfall, ignominy and ruin as well as ignorance, delusions, gloom, inertia, anger, frustration etc.

The Tamsic Guna or quality is like the embryonic membrane that covers the foetus in the womb. They cannot be removed easily and require great diligence, effort, persistence, dedication and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, and the worst type to possess.

The Vasanas that have the Tama Guna in dominance are regarded as the ‘bad Vasanas’ or better still the ‘worst type of Vasana’ that any individual can have.

These Gunas, in varying ratios and mixtures, decide the character and personality of any given unit of creation. In modern world we recognize them as the ‘gene’ special to that individual, the ‘gene’ which makes each individual so unique in this creation. These Gunas can also be compared to the various shades and hues of colours that a painter uses to paint a picture or a portrait and inject life and uniqueness to it. Even the same painter cannot duplicate exactly a picture again—there is bound to be a difference between any two pictures or portraits no matter how invisible, imperceptible, microscopic and subtle it might be.

THE EFFECTS OF THE GUNAS, and HOW THEY AFFECT THIS CREATION.

This has been explained elaborately in a number of Upanishads.

The *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse no. 2 of the Atharva Veda tradition says—“The Lord himself is the one who is the cause of the creation coming into existence; he is the one who sustains and protects it; he is the one who finally concludes it. Towards this end, he willingly utilises the three basic qualities called the Gunas that act as catalysts to give effect to the Lord’s wishes. These three Gunas help to bring about a particular change in creation, and modify the existing equilibrium in accordance with the wishes of the Lord.

These three Gunas, as we have seen herein above, are the following—Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna. The dominance of the first quality called Sata Guna results in the emergence or retrieval of this present creation from the darkness that had prevailed after the previous phase of creation was annihilated. The dominance of the second quality called Raja Guna is responsible for the growth, the

development, the sustenance and protection of creation that has come into existence. And finally, the third quality of Tama Guna brings about the conclusion of the existing creation.

Just like a huge banyan tree is secretly and imperceptibly present in its seed, only to emerge when the situation is conducive for its birth, this entire creation is secretly present in the supreme Lord and waiting for the right conditions that would cause it to emerge into a vibrant world. [And this ‘right condition’ is created when the Sata Guna becomes a dominant factor.] (2).”

It ought to be noted here that all these three Gunas are always present in this world, but in varying degrees. Under normal conditions equilibrium is maintained, but when certain Guna becomes more active or dominant this equilibrium is disturbed, and this results in a change becoming possible. The three Gunas play the role of a catalyst in effecting this change. Even as a computer can only function on the basis of its configuration and soft-wares installed into it, the creature was conditioned to act according to the ratio of these three Gunas built into his thought texture and personality traits. In the present case, when the creation was harboured in the bosom of the supreme Brahm, a quiet balance was in place. When the Lord decided to see the creation come into existence once again after a long hibernation period after its conclusion at the end of the last phase of creation, his mere wish ignited the Sata Guna to become active and charged, and this stirred up the cosmic ocean of quietude which resulted in the first ripples of creation. This has been envisioned by ancient sages and seers as the stirring of the primordial cosmic ether or the cosmic gel that created subtle waves of energy that coalesced with one another and overlapped each other to become energized and gather strength. This produced the primordial sound that has been conceptualized in the form of the Mantra OM. And from this initial whirring and humming came into being the rest of the elements as the primordial cosmic gel began to show signs of losing its homogeneity and becoming more and more heterogeneous.

As the cosmic cauldron began to cool down and the various constituent layers of creation began taking shape, the Sata Guna, being the best and the most sublime of the three Gunas, floated to the surface like butter does in milk. The Tama Guna, being the grossest of the three Gunas, was the heaviest, the meanest and the densest, and therefore it settled at the bottom. Meanwhile, the Raja Guna, being of an intermediary character, occupied the place between the two. There was no fine and well-defined demarcation line between them, and the demarcation was more of being relative in nature. Hence, there were areas where the three intermingled equally, while at others one Guna dominated over the other two.

The Tama Guna, being crude, acidic and corrosive by nature, eroded the part of the creation where it dominated, explaining why the creation ends when this particular Guna becomes dominant. This also explains why the creature in whom the Tama Guna is a ruling character soon lands in grave spiritual trouble. But since the Sata Guna has a natural quality to look up and regenerate, this creation re-emerges from its ruins when the Sata Guna takes over the Tama Guna in a new phase of creation. The Raja Guna helps the nascent creation expand and develop to its full potentials under its patronage. It provides the necessary warmth, energy, stamina and dynamism necessary for growth and development. When the peak is reached, then like the sine wave the downward slide begins, reaches the bottom, and then picks up momentum once again to resurface as a new creation. This is briefly how the cycle continues and the wave of life oscillates infinitely.

The entire process of creation that followed has been explained in various Upanishads in varying languages, but basically all of them assert that Brahm had utilized these three Gunas to effect a change in the prevailing situation as and when the Lord deemed it fit and proper to do so.

The *Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 6, paragraph no. 7 beautifully describes the relation of these three Gunas vis-à-vis this creation. Let us quote this verse and see what it says—“Those other Brahmaands have four mouths, five mouths, six mouths, seven mouths, eight mouths—in this sequence they extend to thousands of Brahmaands with thousands of mouths. [The number of mouths of different worlds extending to thousands of mouths is simply a metaphor to indicate the stupendous number and variety of these worlds. It also might mean creatures ranging from the single celled organisms such as the algae and the amoeba, to the most complex living beings such as the human race.]

All of them are tiny fractions of Lord Narayan’s cosmic body. [Refer Canto 2, paragraph no. 11; Canto 6, paragraph no. 8.]

Each one of them has been created by a separate Brahma (the creator) who has the Raja Guna as the dominant virtue in him and who is only a fraction of the Supreme Being. [The Raja Guna is the inherent quality that motivates Brahma to create the material world around him. Brahma stands for the creative dynamism of Brahm. The Raja Guna is the quality in one’s character that motivates one to get involved in activities of the world.]

Similarly, each world has its own Lord Vishnu (the sustainer and protector) with a dominance of Sata Guna, and its own Lord Maheshwar (i.e. Lord Shiva) who is the concluder with a dominance of Tama Guna. Both of these Gods are but a fraction of the vast and all-encompassing Supreme Being called Brahm.

[The Sata Guna is the best of the three qualities and motivates the one who has it to be gracious, compassionate and merciful towards all; it kindles a tendency to give succour and solace to others. Hence, Lord Vishnu possesses this quality as a dominant virtue in him, and this is why he is a merciful Lord who is entrusted with the task of taking care of the world. Vishnu personifies the ability of the Supreme Being to sustain, nourish and protect this creation. Similarly, Lord Shiva has the Tama Guna in a dominant ratio as this quality is motivates one to be short-tempered, angry and intolerant. This is why Shiva possesses these qualities which are however necessary for him to conclude this creation without showing any regrets. Hence, Shiva personifies the ability of Brahm to conclude this creation when the Lord so decides.

The implication of this stanza is that the creation—no matter at what level it exists at a given point of time—has three basic Gunas or qualities in it in different and varying proportions. These three Gunas together form a ‘triangle’, a geometrical depiction of creation. This is why the creation is called ‘Trigun-Mayi’—one that has three Gunas, one that is completely dependent on and characterised by presence of the three Gunas. In this symbolic triangle representing this creation, even if one of the corners representing one Guna is removed, the triangle ceases to exist—i.e. the creation ceases to exist. That simply translates into an incontrovertible fact that if we must have an entity known as a ‘creation’, then we must have all the three Gunas in place.]

All these Brahmaands or Universes are like numerous fish and bubbles of water that endlessly swirl around in the cosmic ocean of infinite dimensions and depth. [The countless galaxies float in the vacant space of the universe. This ‘space’ is the ‘ocean’ referred to here.] (7).”

The *Devi Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 18 says that the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama are manifestations of the cosmic Mother Goddess. The 'Mother Goddess' is actually a revelation of the dynamic powers, authority, strength and potentials of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being. The Goddess represents the dynamism of Brahm that is employed by the latter to create, develop, sustain, nourish, control and protect this creation, both at the macrocosmic level as well as the microcosmic level. Since these three Gunas determine and control the nature, temperament, behaviour, habits and personality of all living beings, it follows that they are simply manifestations of the dynamic Gunas of Brahm, the Supreme Being, which are personified as the cosmic Goddess.

The varying quantity and intensity of these three Gunas in any given individual would decide his specific character and how he is inclined to deal with the world and a given circumstance. The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular nature of an individual, giving him his individuality and his special personality which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process, et al. Two individuals having the same external form of the gross body might look very much alike but they vary immensely in their nature, habit, temperaments, inclinations, behaviour, thinking, outlook, the way they act and do their deeds, the way they tackle the problems of life, the level of their wisdom and intelligence, their personality and their general way of living.

This is also the reason why it is believed that a creature has to roam in 84 Lakh wombs or forms of life; it is only a metaphor—it does not mean an actual and countable specific number of births that the creatures have to take, but only symbolise the huge possibilities of individual characteristics that are determined by the differing ratios of these three Gunas, and the immense number of individuals that exhibit these characteristics in this creation.

The three Gunas that determine the individual character of the creature, that determine his 'individuality' as compared to the general character of the group to which that individual belongs, are like the *isotopes* in chemistry. The isotope refers to the phenomenon wherein one of two or more atoms of the same chemical element that contain the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons in their nuclei and therefore have the same atomic number and chemical properties but different mass numbers and physical properties. For example, two brothers have the same genes and the same inheritance, but the presence of the three Gunas in different ratios between them changes their personality and thought processes. One may be a highly righteous man while the other might be just the opposite. Their parents are the same, their upbringing is the same, they have attended the same school and ate the same food, but there is a deep chasm when it comes to their character as individuals.

Since each individual is like an independent piece of mosaic that completes the entire picture in conjunction with other such pieces, this individual creature's nature and character helps to determine the overall shape of the creation. These Gunas keep the creation in a state of constant change, because numerous creatures die every moment and new ones are born. The Supreme Being has to be constantly on the alert because of this flux.

The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular 'nature' of an individual giving him his individuality and his special characters which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process et al. Two individuals having the same external form of the gross body—e.g. two men—might look very much alike but they vary immensely in their

nature, habit, behaviour, thinking, outlook, action and deeds, wisdom and way of living. This is what is meant when it said that a creature has to roam in 84 Lakh wombs or forms of life; it is only a metaphor—it does not mean an actual, countable specific number that there are actually and physically 84 Lakh types of bodies of living beings; it only symbolically refers to the huge possibilities that are possible with these three ‘Gunas’ and their different combinations that can imaginably produce a myriad variety of creation that can be created with these three basic qualities and their various sub classes of qualities.

The proportion of the three Gunas decides the nature, natural temperament, tendencies, habits and inclination of the creatures. For example, a person with a greater proportion of ‘Satvic’ (noble) characteristic will be considered nobler than a man with a greater proportion of ‘Rajasic’ or ‘Tamsic’ qualities. So we can say that sages, seers, prophets, scholars and generally enlightened persons have a high degree of ‘Satvic’ qualities in them; kings and householders who live a noble life are example of those with higher amount of ‘Rajasic’ quality in them; while sinners, killers, drunks, rowdy elements, cheats etc. are those people with higher ‘Tamsic’ quality in them. These Gunas have direct bearing on the personality of a man.

The first quality of Sattva is concerned with creation and enhancement of knowledge and wisdom. For this, one has to remain alert and vigilant like Brahma. The ‘Jagrat state’ also corresponds to that state when the creature is awake and interacts physically with the external world, imbibes whatever knowledge and information that comes to it, gains experience, and physically reacts to that knowledge and information. Further, such people are regarded as seniors in society, and they are best depicted in the form of the old patriarch Brahma the creator. They remain so engrossed in the world that they forget who they actually are, what their true identity is, and the very basic fact that what they are thinking to be real is actually not.

Next comes the ‘Swapna state’ in which a man dreams, and it is a metaphor for imagination and visualization of things based on the experience and knowledge gained during the Jagrat state. In this state a man lives and does things in a virtual manner in a virtual world of dreams. He sustains and nourishes his imaginations, fantasies and conceptions in a world of dreams which is far away from the harsh realities of life in the physical world. He suffers and enjoys in his dreams, then when he wakes up, he sometimes forgets what that imaginary world was like, but at other times there have been incidents wherein he has got new insight and new inspiration while he was dreaming. This is how Vishnu sustains and nourishes the creation created by Brahma. For all practical purposes, a dreaming man appears to be in a state resembling the state of Samadhi, or a state when an aspirant is in deep meditation and engrossed in contemplation, because he remains aloof and oblivious to the external world, and remains absolutely motionless. But this state is temporary, because he would revert back or wake up to the Jagrat state. That is why Lord Vishnu, who represents this quality of Raja, is depicted as perpetually reclining contemplatively on the bed of the coiled legendary serpent floating on the celestial ocean of milk called Kshirsagar. Since without a vision and imagination one cannot grow, develop and rise, Vishnu is regarded as a maverick player of fantastic tricks in order to sustain and enhance his interests of looking after the creation. Out of these Trinity Gods, it is Vishnu who assumes so many forms and adopts so many tricks to do the needful.

The third quality of Tama is represented by Shiva, and that is why he shows certain traits which are so typical of this quality—viz. being short tempered, and destroying at the shortest notice; his external behaviour and attire also represents the excess of this lowest quality in him. The Sushupta state that he represents stands for

being totally oblivious of the external world, and remaining in total bliss. This is exactly how Shiva has been depicted—he remains in a perpetual state of meditation, completely indifferent to the external world, unconcerned and detached from the attractions of the enchanting outside when he can find complete bliss inside his own bosom. The Tama quality marks the presence of ignorance in a greater ratio, and this is depicted by Shiva when he remains ignorant of the niceties of worldly behaviour, notwithstanding his exalted stature of being the greatest amongst the Gods.

To understand how the three Gunas affect the Atma, let's take two examples—that of a hot piece of iron glowing red with heat, and the potter moulding various pots from the same clod of earth.

The supreme pure conscious cosmic Atma subjects the Bhoot Atma of the individual creature to the 'radiation' of these 'Gunas'. These 'Gunas' are the three basic qualities present in all the creatures in different permutations and combinations. These 'Gunas' effect the 'Bhoot Atma' differently based on a number of factors—such as for example, the present status of the 'Bhoot Atma' vis-à-vis its past deeds, their cumulative affects, the caliber of its mind and intellect, the position it occupies in the ladder of spiritual evolution, its willingness to change or subject itself to the effects of such radiation etc.

The concept can be understood differently also. A piece of iron, when heated, shows the heat as a 'red hot glow' which fully pervades the iron piece and becomes an integral part of it. The whole piece appears to be one whole mass of something which is red, hot and glowing. When beaten by a hammer, the iron piece bends and can be shaped into any shape. Each new shape, when heated, will show the same glow of red hot fire inside it. Similarly, the Atma provides consciousness to the creature, making it active and lively, subject to receptions of stimuli in the form of various perceptions originating in the external world and received through the organs of perception present in the gross body. The 'heated' body (i.e. the Bhoot Atma made active by the Atma) now becomes susceptible to change (from the impact of the three Gunas) much like the heated piece of iron being hammered by the hammer. The 'hammering' by the three 'Gunas' (the inherent qualities present in every creature) help to cast the individual creature into various moulds or shapes having different characteristics. Even as cold iron is not easily malleable, the creature without the infusion of life injected into it by the Atma is as good as dead and is the least malleable. Here, the allegory is simple—the creature is the iron, the glowing consciousness is the fire, the impinging 'Gunas' is the blow of the hammer, and the Atma is the iron smith.

The wheel of the potter moulds the clay into various shapes, but the driving force of the wheel is the potter. Similarly, the three 'Gunas' mould the characteristic of the creature, but the Atma is the authority, the potter in this allegory, who drives the three 'Gunas'. Just as the potter is not the wheel, the Atma is not affected by the three 'Gunas', it is just an instrument, an implement to shape the character of the creature. Again, even as a wheel is needed by a potter to give shape to a shapeless clod of clay, the Atma needs the three Gunas to mould the characters of the creatures that constitute this creation.

In the beginning the elements were neutral. Anything that is 'neutral' does not do anything; it remains dormant and latent no matter how powerful it is. So, when the first spark was injected in the neutral elements by way of creative energy, there was some subtle electric activity in its neutral structure and their atoms began to get polarized just like we have the an-ions and cat-ions when electrolysis of a neutral liquid is done with the help of electrodes. The negative charges of the 'cosmic electrode' are metaphors for the grosser parts of creation and represented by the Tama

Guna. At the other extreme are the positive charges forming the subtlest parts of creation and represented by the Sata Guna. In between lie the area of mixed charges symbolising the spread of characters and qualities defined as ‘Guna’ in varying proportion and hue of colours and characteristic features in a diffused manner—with one end of the spectrum being the positive charges and the other end dominated by the negative charges. Hence, the Raja Guna may be dominated by the Sata or Tama Gunas depending on which of them is the dominant factor in the mixture. So a creature may be doing worldly deeds because of the Raja Guna, but the way he does them and the way he enjoys their rewards would vary widely depending upon which of the two Gunas, the Sata or Tama, is dominant. These Gunas do not exist in water-tight compartments or one in exclusion of the other, but they form a complex structure, a complex matrix of Gunas where each has some role to play. How the creature carries himself and uses the knowledge and wisdom available to him depends upon this matrix.

This situation can also be likened to loadstone or natural magnet. It knows only to attract as is proved by the earth which is one big natural magnet. The earth pulls everything that comes within its gravitational and magnetic jurisdiction, and never the opposite—i.e. it would never throw things out into space on its own. But when the same loadstone is given an elongated shape of a bar magnet, it begins to have a north and south poles which attract the opposite pole and repel the similar one.

An important point to note here is that ‘Ahankar’ (ego, false pride, arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy and the sense of ‘I’) is the root cause of demoting even the most exalted of souls to an existence equivalent to that of an animal. This is stressed in Jabalu-panishad of Sam Veda tradition, verse nos. 11-18, and Sharav Upanishad of Atharva Veda, verse no. 14 which stresses that ‘Isha’ or the Lord Shiva who is regarded as the supreme Lord of creation had to become a ‘Pashupati’, Lord of animals, just because he is the undisputed Lord of all the creatures, and those creatures who have lost wisdom and a sense of righteousness, those who are overcome with Ahankar, are no better than animals.

The concept that ‘I’ is the body and not the ‘pure conscious soul’ leads to ignorance-based ego (Ahanakar). The constant concept of I vis-à-vis the body and this world leads to the sense of possessiveness in the creature. ‘Pure consciousness’ mired by ego becomes ‘a conditioned consciousness’ and fails to remain pure. This is why ego (Ahankar) has been likened to a minister of the king. It directs and regulates the actions of the consciousness which, under its influence, loses its independence. This ‘conditioned consciousness’—working through the mind-intellect-ego combine is called, inter-alia, ‘Chitta’. The word also means memory. Hence this memory acts as a referral library for the intellect. The latter falls back on it and rely on it whenever it is in doubt. The quality of books in the library guides the student; similarly, the quality of inherent tendencies stored in the library of Chitta directly affects the inputs of the intellect, and through it, the mind and successively down the hierarchy to the body and its organs of perception and action.

Although the soul has nothing to do with this command chain, but for all practical purposes the Atma/soul is deemed responsible for it because of its sovereign nature. So, the sincere seeker/aspirant should delineate this conscious from the rest of the chain and break the nexus between them so as to allow the glory of the pure consciousness of the soul to shine through like the splendorous sun breaking through from behind a curtain of clouds. It is like removing the various veils or covers from around the candle so that its light shines through the darkness of the room and illuminates all the corners of it.

The word ‘Gyan’ broadly means knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and being aware and informed about anything. The knowledge which tells one the truth and reality of anything or situation would be the ‘Sata Gyan’ because it does not hide anything and makes an honest and truthful declaration. The Sata Gyan would involve looking at the positive aspect and constructive side of anything or situation. A wise man with the Sata Guna in a dominant ratio would pick up the good part of the body of knowledge or information available to him; he would look at the brighter side of things and research how life can be made better by this knowledge, not only for himself but for the rest of the society as a whole. On the other extreme hand is the Tama Gyan which would be that knowledge that is acquired with an eye to all the negative aspects of anything or situation, how to exploit them for one’s vested self interest, even at the cost of others. A man with a predominance of Tama Guna in him would have a natural tendency at picking up the negative and destructive part of the available body of knowledge or information. In between is the Raja Guna which inspires a man to live in this world and take care of it as mandated by the Supreme Creator. If he does it in a righteous and auspicious manner, then it would be ‘Dharma Gyan’; otherwise it would be no better than Tama Gyan. This has been explained in *Shaarirak Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 13.

The *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Kanda 1, verse no. 9, says that the three Gunas are revelations of the glories of Brahma, the creator. He needed these Gunas to give individuality, individual personality and character, to all the creatures of his creation.

The *Naradparivrajak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, in its Canto 3, verse no. 77, says that these three Gunas are the basic Dhatus (elements) in creation.

The *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Brahman 3, verse no. 1 says that all the three Gunas depend upon the level of one’s Vidya or his level of wisdom, knowledge, erudition and enlightenment.

The *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 116 elucidates how these three Gunas are like the three Granthis (knots) of the body as far as the ascetic is concerned. Let us see what it has to say—“When the Chandra Naadi and the Surya Naadi (i.e. the Ida and Pingla Naadis corresponding to the left and right nostrils respectively) are brought in harmony, i.e. when they are equally de-clogged and breathing through both of them is done equally easily¹, the aspirant is deemed to have pierced through the three Granthis² symbolising the three inherent Gunas (i.e. the three qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama) that are present in all persons³.

Having managed to pierce through this barrier, the ascetic attains a state of existence that transcends it, i.e. that is not conditioned by any of the three Gunas. Therefore he becomes an embodiment of Lord Shiva himself; he inculcates in him all the auspicious virtues possessed by Shiva along with all the mystical powers, called the various Siddhis, that accompany success in Yoga (116).

[Note--¹Until the time when all the three Granthis are not pierced and the vital wind has not entered the Sushumna Naadi, the person is not able to breathe freely from both the nostrils. The very fact that the passages of the two nostrils are free and allow a free way to the inhaling and exhaling exercise proves that all the toxins in the body have been eliminated and the person has reached the stage when he has successfully achieved the aim of doing Pranayam—to detoxify the body and prepare it for the ultimate goal of Yoga, which is to make one experience the inherent divinity and the

shine of the pure consciousness present inside the person's own self. This shine of the conscious 'self' and the glory of its divinity were marred by the various faults and impurities that had wrapped the person's true 'self' in a dark veil of delusions and ignorance. The various Gunas are the paints that had virtually obscured the real colour of the soul. When they are scrapped off by means of Yoga, the original shine of the pure consciousness comes to the fore.

²The three Granthis are the Brahm Granthi, the Vishnu Granthi and the Rudra Granthi. They have been described in Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 86-87.

³A person who is spiritually inclined and has a clear conscience is the person who is a true Yogi (a true ascetic) and is the one who has symbolically vanquished the three Granthis representing the three Gunas. These Gunas are compared to 'knots' or Granthis because they are impediments in realisation of one's natural qualities and powers of the soul; they prevent the inborn divinity and auspicious spiritual nature of the creature to come to the fore. These Gunas act as conditioning elements, influencing the creature and its overall character. These three basic Gunas or qualities that are present in all the persons in different ratios decide his individual temperament, behavioural patterns, thought processes, and other character and personality traits. The best of the three is Sata which refers to noble traits of auspiciousness and righteousness; a man having a greater proportion of Sata would naturally be a holy, pious and a spiritually inclined man. The second is Raja which makes him inclined towards the world and its mundane affairs and frantic life; he would like to enjoy the world and the comforts provided by its material and sense objects. The last is the Tama quality which makes him pervert, sinful, of a low mental caliber, and very selfish. Such a man is said to be covered by a dark veil of delusions and ignorance.

This conditioning by the varying ratios of the three Gunas results in the creation of myriad variety of characters and temperaments in the creatures, whereas the Atma, the pure conscious soul in all living beings, is the same in all of them. This 'piercing of the three Granthis' is a symbolic way of vanquishing of these three Gunas, or being able to overcome their influences. A person who is free from their fetters is a free man. This is equivalent to his obtaining Mukti, or getting liberation and deliverance from all conditionings effects of and influences exerted by all extraneous elements which mar his own spiritual nature.]”

The *Shwetashwatar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 4, verse no. 10 describes the relationship between Prakriti, Maya and Gunas in a very succinct manner as follows—“Prakriti (primary Nature) should be treated as the Maya, and the supreme Lord called Maheshwar (one who is ‘Maha’—great, and ‘Ishwar’—Lord, of everything) as the maverick Lord who inspires and enables the Maya to not only create this world but also imprint it with its own characteristic qualities (much like the offspring bearing the characters and features, or genes, of the parent).

Thus, the entire creation bears the characteristic qualities and virtues so typical of and unique to Maya; these qualities and virtues form an integral character and nature of this creation as a whole as well as of all its individual units. [They are called the various Gunas.] (10).”

HOW THE GUNAS AFFECT A MAN'S CHARACTER

This question, ‘how the three Gunas affect the man's character’, have been very precisely and expressly narrated in *Shaarirako-panishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda in its verse nos. 7-13. Let us see what these verses have to say—

“Verse no. 7 = There are said to be three inherent qualities or Gunas that determine the basic character and fundamental nature of all living beings. These three are Sata, Raja and Tama (7).

“Verse no. 8-9 = The following are described as the characteristic traits of those people who have the first Guna, the Sata, in predominance—Ahinsa (non-violence, non-killing or non-harming in any way, physical and mental), Satya (truthfulness in all its broad connotations, including such noble traits as trustworthiness and honesty), Asteya (non-theft, non-stealing, non-deceit, non-subterfuge, non-sleight and non-slyness), Brahmcharya (celibacy, continence, abstinence, self-restraint, self-control of the organs and the self), Aparagriha (renunciation and detachment, non-hoarding, giving away of superfluous and excessive wealth to those who are needy, making of liberal charities and donations, giving of alms), abandonment of Krodh (forsaking anger, indignation and wrathfulness), serving one’s Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide), Shuchitaa (cleanliness and purity in all their broad connotations involving the mind, intellect and body), Santosh (contentedness, satisfaction and feeling fulfilled with whatever that is available, without yearning for more endlessly and feeling restless and greedy), Amaanita (lack of pride, ego, haughtiness and arrogance; having humility, piety and simplicity), not to have Dambha (i.e. not to have the negative trait of excessive show of self pride and arrogance; not to be a hypocrite; not to be a bragger, boastful and loud mouthed man, not to be deceitful and be an imposter), to have Aastiktaa (i.e. to have firm faith, unwavering conviction and steady belief in the Truth enshrined in ancient wisdom and the tenets of the scriptures; to have unfaltering faith in one’s self and one’s auspicious goals in life), and to abhor violence of all kind etc. (8-9).

“Verse no. 10 =The following are described as the characteristic traits of those people who have the second Guna, the Raja, in predominance—to have the notion of being a doer of things, to feel that being the doer of deeds one has the right to enjoy their consequent rewards as fruits of one’s labour, to feel that one is the speaker and orator (i.e. one is a wise and scholarly man who is well versed with letters and everyone is eager to hear his wise council of a variety of subjects). In short, to be proud of one’s achievements and successes in this world comes under the purview of Raja Guna (10).

“Verse no. 11 = The following are described as the characteristic traits of those people who have the third Guna, the Tama, in predominance—Nidra (sleep, drowsiness), Aalasya (laziness, lethargy, indolence), Moha (worldly attractions, delusions and their attendant hallucinations), Aasakti (to be greatly infatuated with and mentally and emotionally so intensely attached to the things of this material world that one’s whole being is overtaken by its thoughts), Maithun (to have a conjugal relationship; to establish a union which does not necessarily mean sexual union, but being infatuated with the sense objects of the world and yearning for sensual gratification, to allow the mind and intellect to continuously think of nothing else but that object is tantamount to being in constant physical contact with it or having sex with it), and Chauray (to do things stealthily, to be sly, deceitful, have underhand dealings, the trait of sleight and subterfuge, to steal something not rightly belonging to one’s self etc.) (11).

“Verse no. 12 =The Sata Guna is regarded as the best quality, the Raja of a medium quality, and Tama as being of the lowest quality (12).

“Verse no. 13 = The knowledge of the eclectic non-dual eternal Truth (i.e. of the supreme transcendental Brahm) is regarded as Satwic Gyan (or the best and the excellent form of knowledge and enlightenment which paves the way for a man’s self-realisation and his ultimate liberation and deliverance from this world of birth and death). This aspect of knowledge and erudition is called ‘Satya Gyan’ or knowledge of the Truth.

The knowledge pertaining to Dharma (i.e. that knowledge which enlightens the man about what are considered as noble, righteous and auspicious deeds in this world) come under the category of Rajsic Gyan (because such knowledge would automatically and naturally inspire him to get involved in doing good deeds and then hoping to enjoy the auspicious rewards of such deeds, thereby getting entangled in this world). This aspect of knowledge and erudition is called ‘Dharma Gyan’ or knowledge of Dharma.

But that knowledge that is covered by a veil of darkness signifying ignorance, stupidity and delusions, leading to all sorts of misconceptions and illusions about the truth and reality, the darkness in which phantoms and ghosts are seen, comes under the category of ‘Tama Gyan’, or the knowledge dominated by darkness (13).”

HOW THE THREE GUNAS WERE USED BY BRAHM TO CREATE THIS WORLD

This question has been beautifully described in *Paingalo-panishad*, 1/7 and 2/3. Canto 2, verse no. 3 describes how Sata and Raja were used, while Canto 1, verse no. 7 narrates the use of Tama. Let us see how it all happened—

“Canto 2, verse no. 3 = After that, the supreme creator collected those parts of the individual elements which had the *Raja Guna* (the second of the three fundamental qualities that are inherently present in the entire creation and determine its characters and specific nature) in predominance. This he divided into four segments, and took three of these to create ‘Pran’ (the vital winds). These are five in number—viz. Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Udaana and Samana. Similarly, the sub-Prans are called Naaga, Kurma, Krikan, Devdutta and Dhananjaya.

The main or chief Pran (breath or the life infusing vital wind) has its seat in the following sites—heart, lower buttocks (in the Muladhara Chakra which is a subtle energy centre present at the lower end of the body near the anus and genitals), navel (abdomen), throat and other parts of the body.

Thereafter, he used the remaining fourth part to create the various organs of action (mouth, hands, legs, and the excretory and procreative organs). These five organs have as their functions the following—speech (is the function of mouth), receiving (is the function of hands), movement (is the function of legs), excretion (is the function of the excretory organs such as anus and kidneys), and enjoyments of pleasure (is the function of the sexual organs).

Similarly, he collected those parts of the individual elements which had the *Sata Guna* (the first of the three fundamental qualities) in predominance. This he divided into four segments, and took three of these to create ‘Anthakaran’ (the inner self; the subtle body). It had the following components—Manas (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (the faculty of concentration, paying attention and memory; knowledge and sub-conscious), Ahankara (ego, pride, arrogance) and their attendant Vrittis (inherent character, traits, habits, inclinations and temperaments of a creature based on these basic components of the subtle body). [That is, the basic nature of a

person and the way he would react to a given circumstance, the way he would deal, behave and interact with the world, the way he would interpret things, the way he thinks, the things that would appeal to him and the things he would abhor, etc.—that is, the overall personality of the creature, all depends upon the mental setup tinged with the fundamental character traits that are firmly ingrained in him.]

These components that formed the subtle body had the following characteristic objects that they pursue—Sankalps (making vows promises, having volitions, aspirations and firm determinations etc.—this was the function of the Mana), Nishya (to have predetermined conceptions about anything or situation-- this was the exclusive job of Vrittis), Smaran (to remember and recollect—this was the function of the Chitta), Abhiman (to have pride and arrogance, to be haughty and hypocrite—this was the exceptional domain of Ahankar), and Anusandhaan (research and analysis, quest and enquiry, to determine and arrive at conclusions, to debate and research, to discuss and deduce—this was the function of the Buddhi).

These entities have their seats in the throat, mouth, navel, heart and the mid-point between the two eyebrows. [It is obvious how it happens. A man uses his mouth to express his mind, his thoughts as well as to show off his ego and pride. Throat and mouth are equally important for speaking and gloating over one's acquisitions and successes. The heart is emotional, and its involvement makes a man passionate about his ideas. The navel is the center from where all the Naadis (nerves) fan out in the body, enabling the creature to remain sensitive, alert and active. The center of the eyebrow is the location of the intellect or Buddhi. This Buddhi stands for rational and intelligent thinking, as opposed to impulsive and sentimental responses of the heart. In other words, all the crucial subtle virtues that were manifestations of the Sata Guna in its various levels of subtlety had their symbolic location at these five points in the body.]

The Lord used the remaining fourth part of the 'Sata-Guna' dominant elements to create the organs of perceptions—such as the ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose. The respective functions are—hearing, touching and feeling, seeing, tasting and smelling.

The following are the chief patron Gods or deities of all these organs—the presiding deities of the various directions, Vayu (the Wind God), Arka (the Water God), Pracheta (one of the ancient Prajapatis, the care-takers of the creation according to the Purans), Ashwini Kumars (the twin sons of the Sun God and the medicine men of the Gods), Agni (the Fire God), Indra (the king of Gods), Upendra (the junior Gods who help Indra to carry on his functions), Mritu (the death God or Yam), Chandra (the Moon God), Vishnu (the sustainer), the four-headed Lord (Brahma the creator), and Shiva (the concluder of creation)."

"Canto 1, verse no. 7 = When the supreme creator desired/wished to create the cosmos/universe/world, he invoked his third quality called *Tama*, and then under its influence he wished to establish the three subtle Tanmatras (senses of perceptions of the future organs) into the gross forms of the five primary elements called Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air and sky). [In other words, the primary elements which were hitherto neutral and dormant were now infused with the powers to smell, taste, create, destroy, move about, produce sound that can be heard, and spread their influence in the entire creation while occupying all available space. The result was the subtlety of the elements was undermined, and injected with the Tama aspect of Brahm, they became gross in a gradual and progressive manner.]

Each of these elements was then divided into two, and each of these divisions was then again divided into four sub-segments or sub-divisions. He then took one half fraction of each sub-division of these elements and mixed one-eighth fraction of each of the remaining elements with it. This resulted in the possibility of the creation having an infinite variety of entities which constituted the basic ingredients used to mould this stupendously vast, fascinatingly infinite and magnificently myriad creation where no two entities were alike. These variations were so unimaginably countless that literally it was ‘apparently endless and infinite, apparently eternal and fathomless’. [That is, these virtues of being endless, infinite, eternal and fathomless were the epithets assigned to the creation because it was so vast and of such a stupendously great variety that it was not possible to measure it or see from where it has its beginning and where it has an end. Refer also to Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 1/4-9 and 2/1-18, which is Chapter no. 9 of this volume.]

To create a place where this new creation can be placed or rested, he established the fourteen Bhuvans¹ (the mythological abodes of the creation according to Purans). Once this basic foundation was laid, he then needed the creatures that would now inhabit and populate this creation. So he created the creatures in accordance to the environs of the respective Bhuvans. That is, though the types and number of creatures created by him were much more and many millions of times greater than the number of Bhuvans created, he assigned to them these fourteen abodes depending upon their suitability and adaptability. [After all, what was the use of creation of such a formidably vast and varied world and its inexhaustible supply of natural wealth and resources if there was no one to live in it and enjoy them? So the creator felt the need to create a ‘living being’ in his own image so that he can enjoy this theatre, albeit in the guise of a creature; that is why the creature is regarded as an image of the supreme Lord.]”

The *Shwetashwatar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 6, verse no. 16, describes how the supreme Brahm was the creator of all the three Gunas. To quote—

“That Supreme Being is the creator of the entire creation and the principal factor at the center or core of its being in existence¹.

He is omniscient and all-knowing (refer verse no. 17 below amongst others). He is self created (in the sense that there is no cause of his coming into being, because, for one, he is eternal and infinite, and for second, he is imperishable; so the question of ‘taking a fresh birth’ like other entities of creation does not arise). [Refer verse no. 7 of this Canto amongst others.]

He is the supreme Authority that inspires and regulates Kaal, and is also the cause of its coming to an end (death)². He is a treasury of all the three Gunas (i.e. all the qualities, virtues and attributes that determine the personality, character, temperaments, nature and habits of a creature have been created by him)³. Being omniscient and all-knowing, he is also the treasure of all Vidya or knowledge.

Brahm is the ‘supreme’ Lord who is the ultimate ‘Chief Authority’ in creation, and senior to both the Viraat Purush (the macrocosmic gross body of creation from whom the rest of the visible and invisible world came into existence) as well as Prakriti (Nature; the so-called ‘female’ aspect of creation which was responsible for its coming into being in association with its cosmic male counterpart, the Viraat Purush, and for nurturing the cosmos in its womb as the cosmic embryo)⁴.

He determines the quantum, intensity, density and proportion of the basic ingredients that are required to classify the motley collection of all the basic character

traits that appeared at the time of creation into the three fundamental classes of qualities and character determining attributes that eventually came to be known as the ‘three basic Gunas of creation’ that are inherently present in all the living beings in this creation. [These three Gunas are briefly the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna, and the Tama Guna.]

He is the supreme regulator who controls the wheel of creation (called the Brahm Chakra—refer Canto 1, verse no. 4, 6) from start to finish. Therefore, he is the one who determines, regulates and controls whether or not the creature finds Moksha, whether it remains in shackles or gets liberation and deliverance from this deluding and artificial world of miseries and pains⁵. It is he who maintains a fine balance and equilibrium between any two extremes of creation so that the latter remains balanced and existing in a perpetual manner (16).

[Note—¹This creation has an existence because the Supreme Being is present at the helm of affairs. Just like the wheel rotates around a central axis, and if this axis is removed the wheel would fall apart and cease to be of any relevance, this entire creation revolves around this central Authority known as Brahm which not only keeps every unit in its specific place but also empowers it to carry on with its designated functions, while at the same time keeping a strict tab on its functioning. He is like the Sun around which the planets not only revolve but owe their place and location in the cosmic theatre for it is the gravitational pull of the Sun which keeps the planets in their fixed position in the sky for otherwise they would have spun out of control and ran off randomly to create uncontrolled and unstoppable chaos in the cosmos, colliding with each other and with other entities just like a ball thrown haphazardly in a sports utility shop would cause havoc in it. Besides this regulatory function, it is the Sun which provides light, heat, energy and vitality—the metaphors for ‘life’—to this world, it is the Sun that controls the seasons and the rainfall, it is the Sun that is responsible for photosynthesis in plants which help to provide the basic food to all the living organisms. Therefore, it is unimaginable to have life without the Sun.

In the context of this verse and the philosophy of the Upanishads in general, Brahm is like the illuminated celestial Sun residing in the sky, and the latter is regarded as the most visible, most powerful and most potent form of Brahm. This Brahm resides in the subtle sky of the heart of the living being as his Atma or pure consciousness. It is this Atma around which all life rotates; as soon as this Atma leaves the body, all its value and worth cease to exist. In fact, life itself would cease to mean anything without consciousness. Who would like to deal with a man who is lying un-conscious as if he is dead though he might be legally and clinically alive? Refer verse nos. 4/14, 5/5, 6/9 etc.

²*Kaal* broadly refers to the factors of time, age, period and circumstance in this creation. The word also refers to the God of death. Therefore, this stanza means that Brahm is that overriding Authority which has set the agenda for the forces of Nature defined as time, age, period and circumstance to work strictly according to set rules, and then oversees that they are obeying their mandate. In the context of these forces of Nature being deified as a God called *Kaal* who has been delegated the powers to regulate the function of death and fate of the creature after death, it is affirmed here that this seemingly eternal and imperishable God—eternal and infinite because he outlasts every creature’s life and is present in all the future lives of this creature to decide his future fate based on all records of the creature’s past lives, and therefore apparently seems never to die—would also have to die one day. When? The probable answer is ‘after the last creature has died at the end of creation’, as there would then be no need of this *Kaal* for Brahm because there would be no creature left to regulate. Brahm has delegated his authority to regulate the creation to so many Gods, and *Kaal* is one such subordinate to Brahm. So when he is not needed, he would also go the same way as the other Gods, i.e. he would cease to exist.

According to *Adhyatma Ramayan* of sage Veda Vyas, Uttar Kanda, canto 8, verse no.21-25, Kaal is the eldest son of Vishnu incarnated as Sri Ram. The Lord's union with Maya created Kaal first, hence he is deemed to be the first entity created in this creation. It implies that before anything is born, its end is made a certainty. To quote—"Kaal, disguised as a sage or hermit said to Sri Ram, 'Listen Sri Ram! Listen to the fact as it is (20-21). Oh Lord God! Brahma has sent me to you. Oh Lord, the conqueror of enemies! I am your elder son (22).

Oh the brave one! I was born by your union with Maya (your delusory and cosmic creative powers). I am the destroyer of all, and renowned by the name of Kaal. Lord Brahma—who is worshipped by all the celestial sages, ascetics and hermits (23)—has sent the message to you that your time has come, oh the wise one, to give your protection to the heavens. In some previous time, it was only you who had lived/survived after getting annihilated the rest of the creation (24). Then, by your union with your divine consort named Maya, you had produced me (Kaal) first (as your elder son), followed by the hooded serpent called 'Seshnath Anant' who reclines upon the water (of the legendary Kshir Sagar, the celestial ocean of milk) (25)".

³All the *three Gunas* of Sata, Raja and Tama originate from him as he is the creator of the entire creation, and these three qualities are the fundamental factors which decided the seminal qualities and characters, the nature and temperament displayed by each individual creature depending upon the proportion of these Gunas that it possessed.

⁴This conception is in consonant with the evolution of creation according to the Sankhya philosophy as described in detail in note to verse no. 13 above. The 'supreme Lord' referred to here is Brahm, the Supreme Being from whom the cosmic egg called Hiranyagarbha was born. It was Brahm who inspired both the Viraat Purush as well as the Prakriti to initiate the process of creation by establishing an alliance between the two. In other words, he is the supreme inspirer and motivator as expressly stressed in verse no. 1-3 of this Canto. Entire Canto 1 of Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition is dedicated to this basic idea that Brahm is the Principal Authority who is responsible for the emergence of this creation.

⁵Since the supreme Lord is the inspirer of all the creatures, it is he who determines whether a creature is a worthy candidate for being selected as a student researching for Truth depending upon the creature's past deeds and its present sincerity and spiritual inclinations. It is just like a college principal deciding whether or not to give a candidate admission to his college, keeping in mind the reputation of the institution as well as the ability of the candidate to successfully imbibe the culture of the college along with formal education, and whether the chances of him excelling in his field of study are bright or not because the reputation of any college or university also depends on its Alma Mater.

Once given admission, it is up to the student to live up to the principal's expectations, for simply succeeding in getting admission in a top notch college means nothing if the student has no aptitude and skills, or he becomes careless in his studies and consequentially fails in his exams. Similarly, the supreme Brahm initiates a sincere aspirant into spiritualism by 'inspiring him' and creating circumstances conducive to his spiritual progress, which we shall call 'chance' meeting with a self-realised and competent moral preceptor or guide who would show the aspirant the right path that leads to unfolding the Truth for him. It would be often be noted that there are certain people who have a natural affinity for things spiritual and an equal disdain for things pertaining to this material world. Such people can be regarded as being the fortunate ones who are selected by the Supreme Being to tread on the path he has determined for them. On the other hand there are people who won't do so even if prodded and repeatedly told of the horrific consequences for remaining engrossed in this material world of sensual gratification. They would suffer but would not realise the truth.]

HOW THE GUNAS AFFECT THE ATMA.

What is the Atma? The 'Atma' is the pure conscious 'self' of a creature, the true identity of each individual living being in creation. The Atma is pure consciousness, and it is a microcosmic form of Brahm, the latter being the cosmic Consciousness. Hence it follows, the Atma and Brahm have similar qualities, but with a difference.

What is it? The 'Atma' lives in a gross body of a creature, and is therefore conditioned by the problems associated with its habitat, the body. On the other hand, Brahm has no gross body, and is therefore free from any such shackle.

The concept of how the Gunas affect the Atma has been elaborately dealt with in various Upanishads, for example in the *Maitrayanyu Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse nos. 2-5 of the Sam Veda tradition, this is explained as follows:--

"Canto 3, verse no. 2 = The Atma residing inside the body is like a drop of water on the petals of a lotus flower, but it has apparently become foolish, stupid and ignorant on being defeated and overcome by its own habits, temperaments, inclinations and tendencies, collectively called the various 'Gunas' or qualities as well as the various 'Vrittis' which are inherent to and an integral part of the creature. Surrounded by such a dark veil, which is phantom-like, consisting of these 'Gunas and Vrittis', the creature cannot realise or perceive the supreme, pure essence of the transcendental consciousness residing in its very bosom, and which is the inspiring hub, the driving force and the dynamo for the whole setup.

Hence, in spite of inherently possessing all the good virtues and auspicious qualities, it (Atma) outwardly appears to be sinful, unstable, agitated, fragile, greedy, lustful, passionate, eager, anxious, egoistic and proud. It starts feeling, though erroneously, that 'this is me', or 'this is mine'. It gets trapped like a bird in the net of various faults, blemishes, sins, evils, vices, misdemeanours and other such denigrating and degrading thoughts and activities. Since it gets sucked in this vicious vortex, or is trapped in this vicious cycle of deeds and actions and their incumbent consequences, it keeps on endlessly revolving and swirling in it, wandering in this endless cycle of transmigration which is a result of this innately erroneous belief and grave misconception (2).

"Canto 3, verse no. 3 = Just like an iron smith moulds a piece of iron in any shape he wants by heating it in fire, this 'Bhoot Atma' (the Atma that is conditioned by the five elements called 'Bhut'; the Atma that lives in the gross body of a creature and is affected by the gross body's qualities) is cast in various moulds (i.e., is given different roles, designation and honours, and is entitled to perform as many deeds as are expected of it) by the pure conscious Atma by constantly exposing it to the various 'Gunas' classified as evil 'Gunas' on the one hand and noble 'Gunas' on the other, leading to evil deeds or noble deeds respectively¹.

That is, depending upon the various 'Gunas' it has acquired, the 'Bhoot Atma' goes on circulating endlessly in the cycle of 84 Lakh (1 Lakh = 1,00,000) species of creatures in the creation.

Even as a potter is different from his wheel, the Atma is also separate from these three 'Gunas'².

Again, even as the fire subtly and innately present in a hot piece of iron cannot be beaten when the iron is struck by a hammer, the pure, glorious, glowing and radiant Atma has no faults or blemishes or corruption of its own (when it is hit or

impinged upon by the three Gunas which are like the hammer hitting the piece of iron).

But since it is in constant contact with the 'Bhoot Atma' (the creature having a gross body), the faults of the latter cast a dark shadow on the former. The Atma becomes an accomplice to the deeds done by the 'Bhoot Atma' because of its proximity with the latter and their constant interaction with each other (though the Atma has nothing to do with the Bhoot Atma which is like a mirror image of the 'true' Atma, but is only an 'image' and not the real thing) (3).

[Note :- ¹The Atma subjects the Bhoot Atma to the 'radiation' of these 'Gunas'. These 'Gunas' are the 3 basic qualities present in all the creatures in different permutations and combinations. These 'Gunas' effect the 'Bhoot Atma' differently based on a number of factors —such as for example, the present status of the 'Bhoot Atma' vis-à-vis its past deeds, their cumulative affects, the caliber of its mind and intellect, the position it occupies in the ladder of spiritual evolution, its willingness to change or subject itself to the effects of such radiation etc..

The concept can be understood differently also. A piece of iron, when heated, shows the heat as a 'red hot glow' which fully pervades the iron piece and becomes an integral part of it. The whole piece appears to be one whole mass of something which is red, hot and glowing. When beaten by a hammer, the iron piece bends and can be shaped into any shape. Each new shape, when heated, will show the same glow of red hot fire inside it. Similarly, the Atma provides consciousness to the creature, making it active and lively, subject to receptions of stimuli in the form of various perceptions originating in the external world and received through the organs of perception present in the gross body. The 'heated' body (i.e. the Bhoot Atma made active by the Atma) now becomes susceptible to change (from the impact of the 3 Gunas) much like the heated piece of iron being hammered by the hammer. The 'hammering' by the 'Gunas' (the inherent qualities present in every creature) help to cast the individual creature into various moulds or shapes having different characteristics. Even as cold iron is not easily malleable, the creature without the infusion of life injected into it by the Atma is as good as dead and is the least malleable. Here, the allegory is simple —the creature is the iron, the glowing consciousness is the fire, the impinging 'Gunas' is the blow of the hammer, and the Atma is the iron smith.]

"Canto 3, verse no. 5 = it is also mentioned that this body is full of such 'Tam' category of qualities such as (a) attachments, infatuations and passions, (b) fears and consternations, sorrows, gloom, dejection, grief and melancholy, (c) sleepiness, sluggishness, indolence and lack of attentiveness, (d) fatigue, lassitude, exhaustion and lethargy, (e) old age, grief, lamentations, woes and miseries of all kinds, (f) sorrows, suffering, miseries, wretchedness and agonies, (g) torments and troubles, (h) hunger, thirst, poverty, wretchedness, lowliness, meekness and humility, (i) anger and wrath, (j) disbelief, lack of faith and conviction, (k) heresy and being an atheist, (l) ignorance and lack of awareness of the truth, (m) envy, jealousy, malice and ill will, (n) faults, shortcomings, flaws and blemishes, (o) stupidity, foolishness and idiocy, (p) shamelessness, lack of dignity and self respect, (q) arrogance, rudeness, rashness and snobbery, (q) handicaps, difficulties, hurdles, adverse conditions and obstacles, (r) thanklessness, ungratefulness and showing ingratitude, etc.

Besides these, some of the other traits called 'Raj', which are the medium qualities present in a creatures, are the following —(a) worldly, yearnings, desires, longings and avarice, (b) love, affections and attachments, (c) infatuation and endearment, (d) diseases, ailments and sufferings, greed and rapacity, (e) cruelty, violence and ferociousness, (f) lack of mercy and pity, (g) lust, passions,

lasciviousness, licentiousness and promiscuity, (h) selfish exchanges or interactions with a profit motive and having vested interests, (i) jealousy and envy, (j) unhindered, uncontrolled and unregulated recklessness, (k) restless behaviour, actions and deeds, agitations, restlessness, inconsistency, freakishness, fickleness and being unsteady, (l) desires or yearnings to acquire and possess anything, to produce worldly (not spiritual) wealth and enhance prosperity, to make companions, get their affections and honour, be praised by them and oblige them, (m) to seek shelter and help from someone else other than Brahm, the Supreme Being, (n) the tendency of the sense organs to avoid and abhor things which are not pleasing to them, and (o) yearning, longing and pursuing those objects that lure them or seem attractive to them.

With all these flaws hanging round the neck like a millstone and bogging the creature down, the ‘Bhoot Atma’ gets easily defeated in its endeavours to attain a higher stature for itself than its present standing, to elevate itself spiritually and to break free from the vicious cycle of birth and death, and to find ultimate liberation and deliverance for its soul trapped in this cycle. The result is that it finds new forms in every new birth (depending upon the thousands of possible forms that result as a combined effect of the various permutations and combination of the above sub-classes of the ‘Gunas’ present in the ‘Bhoot Atma’ as described above in this verse) (5).”

The *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 2, verse no. 2 describes how the three Gunas were used by the supreme Creator to create this world. To quote—

“verse no. 2 = The Lord himself is the one who is the cause of the creation coming into existence; he is the one who sustains and protects it, and finally concludes it. Towards this end, he willingly utilises the three basic qualities called the Gunas that act as catalysts to give effect to the Lord’s wishes. These three Gunas help to bring about a particular change in creation, and modify the existing equilibrium in accordance with the wishes of the Lord.

These three Gunas are the following—Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna. The dominance of the first quality called Sata Guna results in the emergence or retrieval of this present creation from the darkness that had prevailed after the previous phase of creation was annihilated. The dominance of the second quality called Raja Guna is responsible for the sustenance and development of creation and its protection. And finally, the third quality of Tama Guna brings about the conclusion of the existing creation.

Just like a huge banyan tree is secretly and imperceptibly present in its seed, only to emerge when the situation is conducive for its birth, this entire creation is secretly present in the supreme Lord and waiting for the right conditions that would cause it to emerge into a vibrant world. [And this ‘right condition’ is created when the Sata Guna becomes a dominant factor.] (2).”

The *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, verse no. 64 says that the forty-seven lettered Mala Mantra of Lord Ram, who was no one else but the supreme Brahm manifested in a human form, has the mystical power of destroying or eliminating the affects of the three Gunas of the Lord’s devotees, thereby liberating them from the fetters of the Maya (delusions) that these Gunas create. To quote—“The final shape of the forty-seven letters ‘Mala Mantra’ of Lord Ram is as follows ‘OM NAMO BHAGWATE RAGHU-NANDANAYE RAKSHO-

GHNA-VISHDAYE MADHUR PRASANNA-VADANAAYA MIT TEJSE
BALAYE RAMAYE VISHNAVE NAMAHA’.

This Mantra pertains to Lord Ram who is crowned as the king of Ayodhya—that is, it relates to the supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being, when he revealed himself as the noble king of Ayodhya. Since Lord Ram had a physical body and a visible form, this Mantra therefore relates to the ‘Sagun’ or manifested form of the Supreme Being that has specific attributes, qualities and characteristics as opposed to the cosmic form of the Lord which is invisible, unqualified and without attributes. In other words, this Mala Mantra honours the Supreme Being known as Brahm in his incarnation as Lord Ram.

However, this Mala Mantra has great potential and possesses mystical powers to liberate the Lord’s devotees from the snare created by the three Gunas (or inherent qualities which are an integral part of all living beings) that are closely associated with Maya (the worldly delusions) which binds the creature to this artificial mundane world and its material sense objects (64).”

THE COLOUR OF THE GUNAS

Upanishads symbolically refer to the *three primary colours* when they describe these *three basic qualities* in the creature. They are white for the Sata Guna, red for the Raja Guna, and black for the Tama Guna. Refer—Shwetashatar Upanishad, 4/5; and Paingalo-panishad 1/3. The Dhyan Bindu Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 9-13 describes these Gunas as having the following colours while it analyses the various components of the Manta OM. The colours are grey or white for the Sata Guna, yellow for Raja Guna, and dark for the Tama Guna.

The *Chandogya Upanishad*, 3/5/4-3/9 and 6/3-4 of the Sam Veda uses these three colours to describe the different types of characters called Sata, Raja and Tama defining the three basic types of creatures and their individual personality traits and temperaments that exist in this creation.

The *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 9-13 describes the colours of the Gunas as follows—“The first letter ‘A’ is symbolically of a yellow colour and represents the predominance of the ‘Raja Guna’ in this creation. The second letter ‘U’ is symbolically of a white or grey hue and represents the predominance of ‘Sata Guna’ in this creation. Finally, the third letter ‘M’ is symbolically of a dark colour and represents the predominance of the ‘Tama Guna’ in predominance.”

The *Paingal Upanishad*, 1/3-9 of the Shukla Yajur Veda clearly states that these three colours were the ones with which Nature representing creation was born and how the supreme creator had subtly entered the entire creation to be uniformly present in its very minutest of corner.

THE GUNAS AS GRANTHIS OR KNOTS

In Tantra texts, these three Gunas are treated as the three Granthis or knots. The *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda is one such. In its Canto 1, verse no. 116 it describes how the three inherent Gunas (qualities) of Sata, Raja and Tama that are naturally present in all the creatures are likened to knots or Granthis that create

obstacles in his spiritual progress and the shine of his consciousness to come to the fore. Verse no. 117 describes the benefits of this achievement. Now let us see what they say—

“Verse no. 116 = When the Chandra Naadi and the Surya Naadi (i.e. the Ida and Pingla Naadis corresponding to the left and right nostrils respectively) are brought in harmony, i.e. when they are equally de-clogged and breathing through both of them is done equally easily¹, the aspirant is deemed to have pierced through the three Granthis symbolising the three inherent Gunas (i.e. the three qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama) that are present in all persons².

Having managed to pierce through this barrier, the ascetic attains a state of existence that transcends it, i.e. that is not conditioned by any of the three Gunas. Therefore he becomes an embodiment of Lord Shiva himself; he inculcates in him all the auspicious virtues possessed by Shiva along with all the mystical powers, called the various Siddhis, that accompany success in Yoga (116).

[Note--¹Until the time when all the three Granthis are not pierced and the vital wind has not entered the Sushumna Naadi, the person is not able to breathe freely from both the nostrils. The very fact that the passages of the two nostrils are free and allow a free way to the inhaling and exhaling exercise proves that all the toxins in the body have been eliminated and the person has reached the stage when he has successfully achieved the aim of doing Pranayam—to detoxify the body and prepare it for the ultimate goal of Yoga, which is to make one experience the inherent divinity and the shine of the pure consciousness present inside the person’s own self. This shine of the conscious self and the glory of its divinity were marred by the various faults and impurities that had wrapped the person’s true self in a dark veil of delusions and ignorance. The various Gunas are the paints that had virtually obscured the real colour of the soul. When they are scrapped off by means of Yoga, the original shine of the pure consciousness comes to the fore.

²A person who is spiritually inclined and has a clear conscience is the person who is a true Yogi (a true ascetic) and is the one who has symbolically vanquished the three Granthis representing the three Gunas. These Gunas are compared to ‘knots’ or Granthis because they are impediments in realisation of one’s natural qualities and powers of the soul; they prevent the inborn divinity and auspicious spiritual nature of the creature to come to the fore. These Gunas act as conditioning elements, influencing the creature and its overall character. these three basic Gunas or qualities that are present in all the persons in different ratios and which decide his individual temperament, behavioural patterns, thought processes, and other character and personality traits. The best of the three is Sata which refers to noble traits of auspiciousness and righteousness; a man having a greater proportion of Sata would naturally be a holy, pious and spiritually inclined man. The second is Raja which makes him inclined towards the world and its mundane affairs; he would like to enjoy the world and the comforts provided by its material and sense objects. The last is the Tama quality which makes him pervert, sinful, of a low mental caliber, and very selfish. Such a man is said to be covered by a dark veil of delusions and ignorance.

This conditioning by the varying ratios of the three Gunas results in the creation of myriad variety of characters and temperaments in the creatures, whereas the Atma, the pure conscious soul in all living beings, is the same in all of them. This ‘piercing of the three Granthis’ is a symbolic way of vanquishing of these three Gunas, or being able to overcome their influences. A person who is free from their fetters is a free man. This is equivalent to his obtaining Mukti, or getting liberation and deliverance from all conditionings effects of and influences exerted by all extraneous elements which mar his own spiritual nature.]

“Verse no. 117 = This state of accomplishment in Yoga when the two divine forces of Nature are united, i.e. when the Shiva element (represented by the Chandra Naadi or the Ida Naadi) and the Shakti element (represented by the Surya Naadi or the Pingla Naadi) are united by the process of Pranayam done as matter of routine during Yoga, the ascetic experiences extreme sense of elation, ecstasy, bliss and joy which is comparable to the one experienced by a thirsty elephant who is able to drink cold water through his trunk to his heart’s content (117).”

THE GUNAS AS VIRTUES

The three Gunas are also regarded as three pairs of divine qualities as follows—glory and prowess, power and wealth, wisdom and dispassion.

The 6 GUNAS or 6 qualities or 6 grand virtues, or Sampatti—The six noble and virtuous qualities or Gunas are the following—(i) Sham (having self restraint and control; having peace, tranquility, serenity and quietness; being able to suppress desires, yearnings and natural instincts and impulses; equanimity, equilibrium); Dam (tolerance, forbearance, fortitude); (iii) Upriti (renunciation, detachment, dispassion, indifference and non-involvement); (iv) Titksha (endurance, patience, fortitude, sufferance, equanimity); (v) Samaadhaan (solution, answer, lack of confusion or doubts, clarity of thoughts and conception); and (vi) Shraddha (having faith, belief, conviction, reverence and devotion).

The 16 GUNAS Or virtues that one is expected to possess are the following—(i) ‘Gunvaan’—to have virtuousness, auspiciousness, righteousness, probity and propriety. (ii) ‘Virya-vaan’—to be able to face all challenges of life; to be valorous, courageous, valiant, resilient and brave. (iii) ‘Dharma-vaan’—to know the essence of what constitutes Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety and auspiciousness) and inculcate these virtues in one’s personal life inspite of all odds. (iv) ‘Kritagya’—to have gratitude; to be grateful for even the smallest favour. (v) ‘Satya Vaakya’—to always speak the truth, even if it means personal suffering. (vi) ‘Dridha Vrat’—to be firm in one’s resolve; firmness of determination, beliefs, promises and vows. (vii) ‘Charitra’—immaculacy of character. (viii) ‘Sarva Bhuteshu Hitaaye’—to be of help to all living beings; to be friendly with and compassionate towards all; to think of everyone’s good and welfare. (ix) ‘Vidvaan’—to be erudite, sagacious, wise, enlightened, knowledgeable, expert in one’s field. (x) ‘Samartha’—to be able and competent; capable; proficient; skilled; possess expertise; to have the aptitude, authority and power to implement something. (xi) ‘Priya Darshan’—pleasant to look at; welcoming, friendly and affable demeanours and countenance. (xii) Atma-vaan—to be self-realised; to be enlightened about the Atma, the pure consciousness that is the true self of the person. (xiii) ‘Jita-Krodha’—one who has conquered anger and wrathfulness. (xiv) ‘Dyutimaan’—to be radiant and glorious with the possession of so many grand virtues. (xv) ‘Anashuyakaha’—not to find faults with others or criticize others, rather to see their goodness and positive virtues. And (xvi) ‘Devaah Bibhyati’—one from whom even the Gods are afraid of in the sense that they respect his greatness and grand qualities, and do not wish to oppose him, resist him or offend him.

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THE TRIUMVIRATE OF CREATION

(According to the Upanishads)

Chapter 4

The 'Triad' of creation

The phrase TRIAD OF CREATION has many connotations as follows—

- (a) Creation, sustenance and conclusion.
- (b) The Trinity Gods—Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder.
- (c) The three worlds called Triloki—terrestrial, subterranean and celestial; also the Bhu Loka or the earth where we live, the Bhuvha Loka or the sky immediately above the earth where those creatures which fly live, such as the birds, as well as where the spirits live, and Swaha Loka or the far away heaven where the Gods live.
- (d) The three Yugs or Eras —Sat Yug or the age when righteousness and virtuousness was at its zenith, Treta Yug when Lord Ram had made his manifestation, and Dwapar Yug when Lord Krishna came.
- (e) The three chief human pursuits —love, wealth and duty.
- (f) The three qualities that a creature possesses and which determine his temperament and behavioural pattern—'Sata' which is the most auspicious noble and righteous of the three qualities, 'Raja' where worldly passion and desire are predominant factors, and 'Tama' where lowly qualities marked by perversion, evil and sins are the dominant feature.
- (g) The three chief tribes or classes into which the human race was divided by the ancients —the Brahmins who were the learned class, the Kshatriyas who were the warrior class assigned the task of giving protection to the society, and the Vaishyas who did commerce and took care of the societies material needs.
- (h) The three primary colours —black, red and yellow.
- (i) The three primary scriptures—the Rig Veda, the Sam Veda, and the Yajur Veda.
- (j) The Trivrikram—the word 'Tri' is a prefix meaning 'three', and 'Vikram' means 'brave, courageous, bold, heroic, powerful, valorous, valiant, strong, best and excellent'. It also refers to Vishnu because he has all these qualities. According to the Puranic concept, Trivikram refers to Lord Vishnu in his manifestation as the dwarf mendicant called Vaaman who had begged the demon king Baali for land measuring

three steps as charity. When Baali had agreed, Vaaman revealed his true identity as Vishnu, who was the Viraat Purush who encompassed the whole creation in his own body. So, in one foot Vishnu measured the whole earth, in the second, the whole sky, and in the third the king's head was measured, symbolically defeating and subjugating him. So, Trivikram refers to the Viraat Purush or Lord Vishnu from whose navel even the creator Brahma was produced aloft a divine lotus with a long stem, and the holy river Ganges emerged from the toe nails of his divine feet. According to Vedas, this Viraat Purush is a manifestation of the supreme, transcendental, attributeless, all-pervading and all-encompassing authority of the universe, known as Brahm. Rig Veda, 10/90/4, states that this Brahm has three legs (Tri) established in the heavens. The macrocosmic male, called Purush, is its first manifestation; from this Purush came into being this creation consisting of 'those who eat food' (the living creatures of the zoological realm) and 'those who do not eat' (the plants and vegetables of the botanical realm). These three —the Viraat Purush, the living creatures and the non-living things —formed the three legs of Brahm.

(k) The three Divine Shaktis—The three cosmic energies referred here pertain to the three forms that the supreme Brahm had taken for the purpose of creation. 'Brahmi' is the energy with which Brahma creates, and its relevant subtle counterpart here is the power to wish and aspire for and expect something. 'Rudrani' is the cosmic energy by which Shiva/Rudra ends this creation, or brings to a conclusion the creation which Brahma had made possible. 'Vaishanvi' is the cosmic energy by which Vishnu sustains and nourishes the creation, and its subtle counterpart is taking actions and doing deeds because without actions and deeds, the creation cannot be sustained. For all these activities—creation, sustenance and conclusion, knowledge, wisdom and intelligence are needed because success in any of these requires the requisite expertise and the ability to use and apply it judiciously.

In other words, Brahma makes this creation possible by wishing to do so in his mind. If the creation is righteous and virtuous, it is sustained and nourished by Vishnu, but if it goes wayward and starts committing evil and sins, Rudra takes charge and uses his energy called 'Rudrani' to destroy that evil part of the creation. Extending this logic further, we deduce that when the evil tendencies in the world will almost eclipse or outweigh the good qualities, Rudra would completely annihilate the creation, but the remnants of good elements left behind will help Brahma to re-start the cycle of creation once again.

According to verse no. 12 of the *Sita Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, the Shakti of Brahm (known as 'Iccha Shakti' that enabled Brahm to have a desire to create and then sustain and nourish this creation) has assumed the form of three Goddesses—viz. Sri Devi (the patron Goddess of 'Sri'—i.e. wealth, prosperity, opulence, majesty, fame, splendour and grandeur), Bhū Devi (representing Mother Earth as well as the patron Goddess of earth, representing the power of Nature to create, sustain and destroy, because it is in the earth that all seeds germinate, all creatures are born, it is from earth that they extract their nourishment, and it is in the earth that they die and perish finally), and Neela Devi (representing the vast and endless sky which is regarded as being the nearest equivalent to Brahm as well as being the patron Goddess of the blue sky representing the entire cosmos and the heaven above the earth).

According to verse no. 16 of the *Sita Upanishad*, the three forms in which Shakti has revealed itself as Goddesses are also known as 'Sri', 'Laxmi' and 'Lakshyamaan'.

That is, it is the Sita principle that has been called by various names such as Sri meaning majesty, magnificence, glory and fame, as Laxmi meaning material wealth and prosperity, and as Lakshyaman referring to these two qualities in their manifold forms because the word 'Lakshya' means a hundred thousand, and the word 'maan' means a measurement.

The Shakti assumes other forms as divine Goddesses—Kali (the black complexioned goddess of war), Tara, and Tripura also known as Tripur Sundari, are also called the Trishaktis, or the divine cosmic energy which has revealed itself in the form of these three divine Goddesses. These Goddesses are the various manifestation of Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva. Parvati is usually referred to by one single epithet—Shakti—which literally means energy, vitality, strength and powers.

The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, in its verse no. 13 says that the Shakti has assumed the form of the following three Goddesses—Gayatri (the rising Sun), at noon when it is meant for Savitri (the Sun in its full glory and splendour), and at dusk when it is meant for Saraswati (the Goddess of knowledge).

The 'triad of powers and strengths' called the Trishaktis that a man possesses are the following—(a) the power to wish and have determination, called 'Ichha-Shakti', because it is only when one wishes to do anything and has the determination to do so that he actually does anything at all and strives hard to get success in it; (b) the power, strength and empowerment obtained as a result of acquisition of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, sagacity, scholarship and expertise. This is called 'Gyan Shakti', simply because merely wish and determination wouldn't suffice if a person does not have the required knowledge and skill, the expertise and wisdom to accomplish his objectives successfully, and (c) the actual ability to carryout his plans to their successful completion, i.e. the ability to do deeds and perform, to take actions and enter into enterprise, called the 'Kriya Shakti', because simply sitting and procrastinating endlessly wouldn't give success unless there is assiduous activity and diligent effort, no matter how wise a man is and how determined he might be. Besides these three, the following are also called Trishakti or the potential powers present in a man—(a) to have influence, impact, affect and sway upon others, (b) to have enthusiasm, zeal, flourish, drive and courage, and (c) to have a good advise in this world as well as the support of divine intercession or intervention of Gods who should be benign and favorably inclined towards him. Further, the three Goddesses—Kali (the black complexioned goddess of war), Tara, and Tripura also known as Tripur Sundari, are also called the Trishaktis, or the divine cosmic energy which has revealed itself in the form of these three divine Goddesses. These Goddesses are the various manifestation of Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva. Parvati is usually referred to by one single epithet—Shakti—which literally means energy, vitality, strength and powers.

The *Sita Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, verse no. 11 asserts that Sita, who is the divine consort of Lord Ram and a personification of the dynamic powers of the superme Brahm, stands for the three Shaktis called Iccha Shakti, Kriya Shakti and Gyan Shakti. As Iccha Shakti she has three forms—viz. Sri Devi (the patron Goddess of 'Sri'—i.e. wealth, prosperity, opulence, majesty, fame, splendour and grandeur), Bhu Devi (representing Mother Earth as well as the patron Goddess of earth, representing the power of Nature to create, sustain and destroy, because it is in the earth that all seeds germinate, all creatures are born, it is from earth that they extract their nourishment, and it is in the earth that they die and perish finally), and Neela

Devi (representing the vast and endless sky which is regarded as being the nearest equivalent to Brahm as well as being the patron Goddess of the blue sky representing the entire cosmos and the heaven above the earth).

She has also manifested as the Sun, the Moon and the Fire.

(l) The 'Trividya' or the triad of knowledge usually refers to the comprehensive knowledge of the three primary Vedas, i.e. Rig, Sam and Yajur. [Refer Sita Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 21.]

But it has a vast field and would also encompass in its ambit the knowledge that pertains to the three legendary rewards of righteousness—i.e. 'Artha' or material well being and prosperity, 'Dharma' or possessing righteous qualities, being virtuous and noble, and 'Kaam' or being successful in fulfilling all desires.

It also includes a complete knowledge of existential world—i.e. its creation, sustenance and annihilation or end or conclusion. It involves the fundamental truths of existence and the mysteries associated with them.

Knowledge of what happened in the past, what is happening anywhere at the present, and what would happen in the future is also called Trividya.

From the metaphysical point of view, the knowledge of what happens to the creature in his three principal states of conscious existence in this world—i.e. the waking state called 'Jagrat', the dreaming state called 'Swapna', and the deep sleep state of existence called 'Sushupta' along with the three bodies that the pure consciousness relates to in these three states, viz. (a) the gross body consisting of the five organs of perception, e.g. eyes, nose, tongue, ears and skin, as well as the five organs of action, e.g. the hand, the leg, the mouth, the anus, and the excretory organs, (b) the subtle body consisting of the mind intellect complex, and (c) the causal body consisting of the pure conscious Atma.

(m) According to the revered sage Adi Shankarcharya's commentary on *Shwetashwatar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 7, the *three fundamental aspects of the world* which give the latter three distinct characteristic forms are (1) 'Bhokta' or the one who enjoys or suffers, or the consumer who finds pleasure in the objects of this material world as well as the one who has to suffer the consequences of his actions, i.e. the living creature, (2) 'Bhogyā' or that which is enjoyed or suffered from, or consumed in one form or the other, i.e. the material objects of this consumable world, and (3) 'Niyanta' or the one who controls and rules over the other two, i.e. the Supreme Being.

To quote the *Shwetashwatar Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 7—"The supreme transcendental Authority of creation whose glories are being sung by the Vedas is known as Brahm. It is a divine entity that is beyond the purview of all worldly deceits and delusions, is most pure, sublime and holy, and is eternal, truthful and imperishable. It is in this Brahm that the entire world having three dimensions, called the 'Triad of Creation', is firmly established, or has its basis and foundation.

Those who are well versed in the eclectic knowledge pertaining to Brahm and have a holistic view of this supreme Divinity realise that it is present in their own bosom (heart) itself and nowhere else. This self-realisation takes a firm foothold by deep meditation, resulting in a state of perpetual blessedness. Such self-realised spiritual aspirants remain submerged in the bliss obtained by experiencing the presence of Brahm inside their own self. The affect is that they are able to get rid of the fetters of ignorance and delusions that tie them to this body and the world, and

consequently they find permanent liberation and deliverance from this entrapment (i.e. they attain emancipation and salvation for their ‘self’, for their soul) (7).”

The *Naradparivrajak Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Canto 9, verse no. 12 describes this concept as follows—‘By knowing the truth about the ‘Bhokta’ (i.e. creature or the living being who is the one who physically lives in this world of material sense objects and either enjoys or suffers it), the ‘Bhogya’ (i.e. the things of the world that are enjoyed or suffered from), and ‘Prerak’ (i.e. the supreme Brahm one who inspires, who motivates, who drives the creature, the individual as well as the entire creation, to do anything at all), the wise spiritual aspirant comes to know or learn about everything worth knowing or learning in this world.

The real underlying principle that operates in all these three planes of existence—i.e. as the Bhokta, as the Bhogya and as the Prerak—is the same, and it is known as Brahm. [In order to understand what is meant here, let’s take a very simple example from the material sciences. As is well known and established, the atom is the basic building block of everything. If there is anything in existence, if we have any material object, then it is certain there must be an atom at its fundamental core. Without the atom nothing can have any physical existence. Likewise, without the underlying truth known as Brahm nothing can come into existence in this creation. Again, as ordinary eyes cannot see the atom, ordinary persons cannot see Brahm. And again, as any scientist worth his salt knows for certain about the existence of an atom though he cannot see it in physical terms, every wise and enlightened spiritual seeker knows about the truthful existence of Brahm. To disbelievers this concept of Brahm is as incomprehensible and abstract and incredulous as the concept of the atom appears to ordinary men.] (12).’

(n) The Triad consisting of the Ishwar or the supreme Lord of all that exists, Jiva or the living being or the creature, and Prakriti or Nature—these also form the apex of the triangle which is called the world. [Refer: *Shwetashwatar Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 9.]

Another variation of this metaphysical view of the ‘Triad’ of creation is that these three corners of creation consist of ‘Ishwar’, ‘Jiva’, and ‘Brahm’. [Refer: *Annappurna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 5, verse no. 77.]

Now let us see what these two Upanishads say on this ‘Triad of creation’.

Shwetashwatar Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 9 = “The two poles or extremities of this creation (like the two opposite poles of a magnet—the south and the north) have opposite attributes. One is an embodiment of Gyan (omniscient and all-knowing) while the other is Agyan (ignorance and lack of knowledge) personified. One is almighty and omnipotent while the other is most impotent and incompetent. [Obviously, these two poles are Brahm or the supreme transcendental Authority of creation, and the Jiva or the living creature respectively.] But both of them have one thing in common—and that is they both have no ‘birth’ as the term is usually and conventionally understood to mean¹.

The intermediary entity, the ‘third entity’ that is present between the Jiva and Brahm is the one that creates this delusion of the former being a Bhokta (consumer and enjoyer of the material objects of the world) as well as an illusion of an artificial separation between the Jiva and Brahm. This intermediary is called ‘Prakriti’ or ‘Maya’. [This Maya is so deluding by nature that it creates the Triad of a Bhokta, Bhogya and Niyanta as described in note to verse no. 7 above. This Maya or Prakriti

is un-real and imaginary; it has no real origin but it is there nevertheless because of the erroneous conception of the mind that there is difference between the individual Atma of the Jiva and the cosmic Atma of creation.]²

The cosmic Atma or the consciousness that prevails uniformly throughout the creation as Brahm personified is limitless and infinite as it has no boundaries and inhibitions. This makes it all-pervading, all-encompassing and all-inclusive as compared to the limited scope and prevalence of the creature having a gross perishable body³. It does not do any deeds either (for the simple reason that deeds are done by a physical body and Brahm at the cosmic level has no such body, and therefore the Atma which is Brahm personified does not do any deeds).

When the creature is wisened to this eclectic fact and becomes realised of the truth, it begins to see these three units (the Jiva, Brahm and Prakriti) of creation as one single indivisible whole. It is then that it is said to have acquired true and effective knowledge of the reality (9).

[Note--¹The word creature or a *Jiva* actually refers to the Atma, and not the physical gross body of the living organism, and this Atma is pure eternal consciousness which has no end or beginning. Besides this point, the pure consciousness residing in the creature is the same as the one that prevails at the cosmic level because energy by whatever name it is known or called does not perish but only changes in its form. For example, we have kinetic energy, light energy, heat energy, sound energy etc.—all are interchangeable. The energy of the spirit can be called the ‘spiritual energy’. The cosmic consciousness is called Ishwar or the supreme transcendental *Brahm* who is the Lord of all that exists even as the Atma is the Lord of the gross body and the visible world in which it lives. That is why both are without a birth as enunciated in this verse because Consciousness and the ethereal Spirit are eternal, infinite, imperishable and infinite entities.

²Citing the example of the *bar magnet* would be easier to unravel this mystery. At one end of the magnet is the North Pole which is a metaphor for an exalted stature as the ‘north’ points ‘upwards’. On the contrary, the South Pole points ‘downwards’ symbolising demotion and degradation. The former refers to the Supreme Being, the Ishwar, while the latter refers to the deluded creature shrouded by ignorance because of his lowly stature in the spiritual ladder. And the two ends are linked with each other by the shaft or body of the magnet proper which falls in between. But it must not be forgotten while artificially breaking the magnet into three units for the purpose of study that it is called a ‘magnet’ in its entirety only when it consists of these three units in an indistinguishable, immutable, indivisible and inseparable form. Go on breaking the magnet and the smaller pieces that result also would have these three fundamental units—viz. the North Pole, the South Pole and the central part.

The point is that the exalted Being known as the Lord of creation or *Ishwar*, and the offspring of this Being, the *Jiva* or the creature, are not two distinct and separable units of the creation. They are both the two ends of the same magnet symbolising the creation. Since the creation is physically visible, verifiable and tangible, it must have two ends as anything that has a definitive shape and form must have a beginning and an end. The argument ‘what if we consider the case of a circular magnet instead of a bar magnet’ is answered by the example of the *wheel* given in verse no. 4 of this Canto.

Now, the space between the two ends of the magnet links these ends much like the *Prakriti* which acts as the bridge between the Jiva (creature) and Brahm (the supreme transcendental Being of creation). When the creature is ignorant, it thinks in terms of ‘this and that end’ of the creation, whereas when it becomes wise and enlightened it sees no difference between them even as naming the two poles of the bar magnet as north or south, or designating the two electrodes of the electric cell as the positive cathode and the negative cathode, or one particle of the atom as

negatively charged electron and its counter-balancing force as the positively charged proton, or the terms cat-ion and anion—are all man made terms which should be taken in the correct perspective as an attempt to explain physical phenomenon.

In this example of the magnet, there is no physical existence of any such thing as a ‘North Pole’ or a ‘South Pole’—these are man-made distinctions in order to explain the phenomenon of magnetism. We cannot separate the North Pole from the South Pole of a bar magnet and still retain an entity called ‘the magnet’, for if such separation were likely to happen at all there would be no magnet left. Likewise, we cannot separate the electron from the proton and still retain an ‘atom’, for then the atom would cease to exist. Similarly, the supreme Ishwar and the Atma have no difference at all. The Prakriti or Nature acts as a go-between the two, and when the wise Jiva or creature realises this it sees an underlying element of uniformity between itself, Nature and Ishwar—i.e. that they are all part of one uniform, indivisible and immutable whole known as Creation. It is not possible to separate the Jiva’s true self from Brahm as much as it is not possible to separate the North Pole from the South Pole of a magnet. Refer also to Canto 4, verse no. 10.

The most stunning aspect of this analogy of the magnet or the atom is this—the ‘force or energy’ that entitles the piece of rod to be called a ‘magnet’ is the universal force of Nature known as ‘magnetism’. If the magnet displays no attractive or repulsive powers, it would not qualify to be called a magnet. This hidden subtle but dynamic and powerful energy called magnetism that empowers the ordinary and innocuous looking piece of magnet with its astonishing capabilities of attracting or repelling something is a metaphor for *Brahm* because the latter also remains hidden from view like magnetism but impels, empowers and energizes the world to carry on with all its astounding variety of activities. Similarly, in the case of the atom, the hidden stupendous fount of dynamic energy lying concealed inside it which makes the atom so feared as well as adored is a metaphor for *Brahm* for the same reason as the one applied to magnetism.

In other words, the subtle and hidden but sublime and almighty Consciousness that is present concealed in a secret and an imperceptible form in the entire creation as its integral and inseparable part, and which gives the entire world its worth, importance and significance is called Brahm.

³The cosmic Atma or Cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm is an ethereal entity that can be compared to the wind, the direction and the sky which have no physical barriers and are not subjected to limitations that arise with the possession of a gross body. The individual creature on the contrary is burdened by the limitations of the gross body which cannot display the characteristic freedom and infinity shown by Brahm in the form of the wind, the sky or the various directions of the open sky.]”

Annapurna Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 5, verse no. 77 = “The sky element is a uniform entity that is universal and immutable because it cannot be divided or fractioned or portioned. But the same sky is given different names according to the space it occupies—for instance, it is called ‘Ghatakash’ when it is present in the vacant space of a pot, and ‘Mahakash’ when it is considered in its cosmic form that is present outside the body of the pot. [And, when the pot is broken, both the forms of the sky, viz. the Ghatakash and the Mahakash, become one and the same, having no separate existence or name. Hence one concludes that the different names assigned to the sky element is basically fallacious, and has its genesis in ignorance of the fundamental truth about the sky.

Similarly, the Atma is universally the same entity; it uniformly pervades throughout the creation, both at the micro level of an individual creature, as well as the macro level at the plane of creation or world at large. Therefore, to treat the Jiva (a

living being; a creature) as being separate or different from Ishwar (the Supreme Being) is an erroneous idea based on fallacious premises and ignorance of the truth.

[The Atma is the same in all the creatures, and this Atma is nothing but pure consciousness that is an entity established as being divine, sublime, subtle, universal, uniform, immutable, indivisible, eternal, all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent etc. It is this same Atma that resides in the gross body of any given individual as well as in all other creatures in existence. This is the micro-level view of the Atma. At the cosmic level, it is the same Consciousness that exists at every level of creation; it is this Consciousness that is the cause of this creation, its development, growth, expansion, and its conclusion. Even after the end of one cycle of birth and death, it is this Consciousness that prevails, and then becomes the fountainhead from which the next cycle sprouts forth, and upon which it rests.

This Consciousness known as the Atma is the central pivot around which the whole wheel of creation revolves. This fact is elucidated in a number of Upanishads. Since the Atma is one and immutable, it is the same irrespective of the level or plane of creation in which it exists. Again, the Atma is pure consciousness and nothing else. Therefore it follows that there is no fundamental difference between the Jiva and Ishwar as both are the same ‘consciousness’ or Atma personified.

The treatment of an entity that is universally and indisputably ‘one’ and non-dual, i.e. which is never ‘two or more’, as having more than one forms or existences is indeed fallacious and extremely absurd.

Therefore, to treat the Jiva and the Ishwar as two distinct or separate entities is fallacious, erroneous and misconceived (77).”

(o) The *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 36 mentions the triad of creation as follows—“A person who is aware of the presence of the supreme transcendental Being, the Supreme Being, in all the three places¹, the three paths², the three forms of Brahm³, the three Akchars or letters⁴, the three Maatraas⁵, as well as in the ‘Ardha Maatraa’ or the half-syllable—such a person is the one who is deemed to be truthfully wise, erudite and enlightened about the fundamental tenets of the Vedas and the essence of their teachings (in the form of the great sayings called the Mahavakyas or the great sayings and other maxims and axioms of the scriptures (36).”

Now let us see what these three places, the three paths, the three forms of Brahm, the three Akchars or letters, and the three Maatraas are.

¹The *three places* where Brahm resides are the three states in which consciousness exists, viz. the waking state, the dreaming state, and the deep sleep states of consciousness. The three places also refer to the three worlds called Triloki—viz. the terrestrial world represented by the word ‘Bhu’, the sky above the earth represented by the word ‘Bhuvaha’, and the heavens represented by the word ‘Swaha’. Besides these interpretations, the three places refer to the three planes of time—viz. the past, the present and the future. The word in its broader perspective would involve the ‘triad of the entire creation’ because everything that exists is nothing but a manifestation of on single non-dual cosmic Truth known as Brahm. This is because of the simple fact that the creation ‘does exist; it is seen, witnessed, lived in, and is verifiable and tangible’, and not some hypothetical conjecture based on the figment of imagination.

²The *three paths* are the following—the two extreme paths, one that leads to his pomp, reputation, glory and fame, and the other that causes just the opposite to happen, leading to his ill-fame, ignominy and degradation, and the third path is the

median one of moderation that is regarded as auspicious and well thought of. It is marked by the virtues of detachment, dispassion and non-involvement. According to some versions, these three paths are represented by the three aspects of the fire sacrifice by which the Supreme Being is worshipped, viz. ‘Dhum’ or the aspect of the fire sacrifice when there is smoke and much sputtering and crackling of the firewood before it catches fire properly, ‘Archi’ or the aspect of the fire sacrifice when the flames are burning brightly and brilliantly, and ‘Agati’ or the concluding part of the sacrifice when some firewood or other offerings remain half-burnt or incompletely burnt, leading to either smoldering pieces of leftover offerings, or the residue of the extinguished fire in the form of still-smouldering pieces of charcoal and ambers. Refer also to verse no. 93/12-93/15 which describes the three paths that the Atma takes from the metaphysical point of view.

³The *three forms of Brahm* are the following—the ‘Vishwa’ representing the gross form of the visible world in which the individual creature lives in his waking state of consciousness, the ‘Viraat Purush’ representing the gross form of the invisible cosmic parent body in its cosmic plane of waking state from which all the individual creatures of this world have come into being, and ‘Brahm or Ishwar’ which that entity from which even this Viraat has evolved. Another interpretation of these three forms of Brahm is its manifestation as the Trinity Gods consisting of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder.

⁴The *three letters* are the three letters of OM, i.e. A, U and M. These three letters cover in their ambit the entire gamut of creation, viz. ‘A’ covers birth, ‘U’ covers growth and development, and ‘M’ indicated death or conclusion.

⁵The *three Maatraas of Brahm* are represented by the three phases in which this creation has evolved as a fraction of Brahm. These are called ‘Hrisva/Hrasva’ or the small beginning indicating the primary forms of life such as algae and fungi, the ‘Dirgha’ or the most evolved and widespread form such as the higher species of animals and the highest rung occupied by the humans, and ‘Plut’ symbolising the rudimentary forms left after the creation come to the end, or the conclusion of the creation itself. If these are applied to the divine word OM standing for Brahm, then the letter ‘A’ stands for Hrisva/Hrasva, the letter ‘U’ for Dirgha, and the letter ‘M’ for Plut.

(p) The triad of *seer* (the one who sees), the *seen* (the object) and the process of *seeing*—This concept has been explained in the Krishna Yajur Veda’s (i) Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 15, and (ii) Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 20.

The *Tejobindu Upanishad*, canto 5, verse no. 15 says—“ The Atma is beyond the trilogy consisting of the seer, the object seen, and the process of seeing¹. The Atma stays in such a sterilized environ so to speak that such measures of judging the authenticity of any entity’s existence that are normally applied to things of this world do not apply to it and never corrupt it. The Atma is neither the Mana (mind and heart—i.e. the subtle aspect of the body) of the creature. In fact, the Atma is the pure and truthful ‘self’² (15).

[Note—¹This trilogy applies to the visible world which is gross and has a physical body. In this world, anything that can be actually seen and observed by the eyes is regarded as truthful, and the rest merely hearsay and based on imagination. The Atma is a very subtle and an infinitely sublime entity that cannot be physically seen in the ordinary sense of the term ‘seeing and observing’ as it is applicable to other material things of this physical world. But merely the fact that it cannot be physically seen by

anyone does not exclude its being in existence just like the fact that no one has seen an atom or the air element, but no one can deny their existence at the same time.

²The Atma is such an enigmatic and mystical entity that it cannot be subjected to any standard yardstick or fixed criterion; it cannot be confined within the parameters of definitions and connotations expressed in words. It cannot be said to this or that, or even denied to be not this or that—for it is everything all at once. This is what makes the Atma such a paradoxical entity and unique. If anything exists, it must be certainly the Atma much like the case of golden ornaments compulsorily having gold in them if they are to be called ‘golden’.

The *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 20 says—“Shed the concept that there is a triad consisting of a seer, an object that is seen, and the process of seeing itself. [When you have developed a high degree of sense of non-duality, when you have cultivated a high level of equanimity, detachment and dispassion from everything and everyone, when you would want and need nothing and see the same universality everywhere, when ‘this’ would be as good as ‘that’ for you, there would cease to be any need for you to get attracted to anything charming in the outside world which would be more charming than the subtle world harbouring the Atma. Therefore, there would be no ‘seer’, nothing to be ‘seen’ and hence no need to engage in the process of ‘seeing’—the three worlds merge into a single point.]

You should dump them along with all related Vasanas (desires and wishes; passions and yearnings). [You should inculcate the habit of naturally having no desire to see anything, rather than suppressing these desires. When you would realise the truth of the fact that everything that a man wants to see in the world because they attract his attention and appeal to his senses are actually worthless, false, imaginary, entrapping like a bird-catcher’s snare, and a giver of countless agonies in the long run, you would naturally develop loathing for them and drop them like hot potatoes.]

So, you should employ the first type of Bhumika (Shubecha) to concentrate and research upon your Atma, the pure consciousness and your true ‘self’. That is, you should cultivate auspicious and noble desires and wishes while you have to live in this world during your waking state of consciousness. So, instead of seeing the attractions of the external world, seeking pleasure from such sights, and then allowing yourself to get hooked to them, yearn for them and spend your entire life running behind this mirage, you would rather do better and show maturity of wisdom if you divert your mind and intellect to see what the truth is by inculcating deep insight into the world of ‘truth and reality’ consisting of the Atma which is not only your pure and true ‘self’ but also the universal and uniform cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm (20).

[Note—The state of existence reached now as described in verse nos. 17-20 is synonymous with the Turiya state which is the highly evolved spiritual state of sublime existence of the consciousness.]”

(q) The triad of *doer of deeds*, the *object* of deeds done, and the *cause* of deeds done—this concept has been explained in the *Varaaha Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse no. 48, and Canto 4, verse no. 35 describe the relationship between the deed, the doer and the cause.

(r) The triad of *Bhokta* (enjoyer), *Bhogy*a (object that is enjoyed) and *Prerak* (inspirer). This concept has been explained in *Narad Parivrajak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 9, verse no. 12 as follows—“ A wise, erudite, knowledgeable, learned and enlightened man is he who knows, who firmly believes, who is steady in his unfaltering conviction that the supreme Lord (Brahm) is

honourably ensconced in his own bosom, in his own subtle heart as his Atma which is pure consciousness and his true self.

There is nothing better or superior to this Brahm or pure and truthful Consciousness that is worth paying any attention to, or imagining, even for a fleeting moment. [That is, the only thing worthwhile of paying any attention to, anything worthy of spending one's time and energy on even for a fraction of a second is Brahm.]

By knowing the truth about the 'Bhokta' (i.e. creature or the living being who is the one who physically lives in this world of material sense objects and either enjoys or suffers it), the 'Bhogya' (i.e. the things of the world that are enjoyed or suffered from), and 'Prerak' (i.e. the supreme Brahm one who inspires, who motivates, who drives the creature, the individual as well as the entire creation, to do anything at all), the wise spiritual aspirant comes to know or learn about everything worth knowing or learning in this world.

The real underlying principle that operates in all these three planes of existence—i.e. as the Bhokta, as the Bhogya and as the Prerak—is the same, and it is known as Brahm¹ (12).

[Note—¹In order to understand what is meant here, let's take a very simple example from the material sciences. As is well known and established, the atom is the basic building block of everything. If there is anything in existence, if we have any material object, then it is certain there must be an atom at its fundamental core. Without the atom nothing can have any physical existence. Likewise, without the underlying truth known as Brahm nothing can come into existence in this creation. Again, as ordinary eyes cannot see the atom, ordinary persons cannot see Brahm. And again, as any scientist worth his salt knows for certain about the existence of an atom though he cannot see it in physical terms, every wise and enlightened spiritual seeker knows about the truthful existence of Brahm. To disbelievers this concept of Brahm being at the core of everything in this creation seems to be as incomprehensible and abstract and incredulous as the concept of the atom being the fundamental unit of everything in this world appears to ordinary men. Since he cannot see the atom he believes this to be a cock-and-bull story conjured up by modern science; this concept is too abstract for a man too preoccupied with his humdrum life and daily chores.

From the perspective of the Upanishads, it is the Brahm that actually enjoys anything in his manifestation as the Jiva or the living being. This is because the Atma living in the Jiva is Brahm manifested in a subtle form as the Pran or life-infusing consciousness present in the body of the living being.

It is the Brahm that is enjoyed in its form as the material world. This is because the gross world is also a manifestation of Brahm in its gross form known as the Vishwa.

And it is the same Brahm that provides the medium or the inspiration to the Jiva to enjoy this world. This is Brahm in its form as the subtle mind and the heart that inspires the living being to do anything in this world.

So we deduce that all the three aspects of creation—the seer, the seen and the process of seeing are nothing but Brahm operating in them.]”

(s) The *Shandilya Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 3, section 1, verse no. 6 describes the *triad of creation* in the context of describing the form of Brahm which is called 'Sakal-Nishkal', i.e. one that shows apparent dual nature as being visible and invisible at the same time. To quote—

“Verse no. 6 = Finally, the 'Sakal-Nishkal' form of Brahm is being described now.

The supreme transcendental Brahm had a wish to empower himself to expand and reveal his non-dual, single and unqualified form that was invisible and most

subtle into numerous forms that had various qualities, were gross and visible. To make it possible he did Tapa (penance and austerity) for empowerment.

It was then that the triad of creation came into being due to this Tapa. This 'triad' assumed many forms, such as the three 'Akshars'¹, the three 'Vyarihitis'², the 'Gayatri Chanda' having three steps³, the three primary Vedas⁴, the three Varnas⁵, and the three Agnis or sacred Fires⁶.

[Note—¹The word *Akshar* literally means a letter. Hence, the three Akshars are the three 'letters' of the word OM that stands for Brahm—viz. A, U and M, that symbolized the three aspects of the would-be creation—its origin, its expansion and growth, and its conclusion respectively.

²The three *Vyarihitis* are the first words pronounced by Brahma the creator at the beginning of creation—viz. Bhu from which the terrestrial world came into being, Bhuvaha from which the sky and the lower heaven came into being, and Swaha from which the vast heavens came into being.

³The *Gayatri Chanda* having three steps refers to the first and primary method of composition of verses having three lines in which the Vedas were originally revealed.

⁴The three primary *Vedas* are the Rig/Rik, the Sam and the Yajur Vedas.

⁵The three *Varnas* are the three classes in the society—viz. the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas.

⁶The three *Agnis* or sacred Fires are the following—the 'Garhyapatya Agni' which is the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice, the 'Dakshinagni' which is the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end, and the 'Ahavaniya Agni' which is the fire to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice.]

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About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

Genre of Writing: Spiritualism, Philosophy, Metaphysics, Religious, Devotional and Theological.

The author's Books are available for order online both in 'e-book' format and 'paper-back book' format at following websites—

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(A) List of Books that are currently available as mentioned above :-

(A-1) (1) The Chariot of God: Dharma Rath; (2) OM and Naad; (3) YOGA—Its Practice and Philosophy according to the Upanishads; (4) Ram Geeta; (5) The Revelation of Creation—as envisioned in the Upanishads; (6) The Pentagon of Creation: As Expounded in the Upanishads; (7) The Triumvirate of Creation; (8) Maya: The Whirlpool of Delusions in Creation; (9) Surdas-Ram Charitawali; (10-a) The legend of Lord Shiva: Book 1 'Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati'; (10-b) Book 2 'Lord Shiva's Sacred Hymns'; (10-c) Book 3 'Shiva's different names & their significance, Shiva Puran, Upanishads'; (11) the Mahavakyas of the Upanishads; (13) Lord Ram's marriage with Sita (based on Tulsidas' books "Ram Charit Manas", "Janki Mangal", "Ram Lala Nahachu" & "Geetawali", and sage Veda Vyas' book "Adhyatma Ramayan"; (14) "Anthology of Sacred Hymns, Stotras & Mantras of Lord Ram"; (15) "Vairagya Shatkam" of king-sage Bhartrihari; (16) An Anthology of the Sanyas Upanishads-Parts 1 and 2; (17) "Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan" or the "Aadi Ramayan" based on Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas; (18) The Legendary Glory of Hanuman; (19) "Narad Bhakti Sutra"—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the

Principles of Love for the Lord; (20) “Shandilya Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord according to the illustrious sage Shandilya; (21) “Bhakti Sutra Mala”—A Garland of Spiritual Wisdom in the form of an Anthology of Aphorisms pertaining to Bhakti or devotion, love and affection for Lord God; (22) Glory of Lord Ram’s Holy Name, Sacred Mantras, Stotras & Hymns; (23) Saints and Non-Saints: Their Distinguishing Characters and Qualities; (24) A True Guru (Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher, Preceptor, Guide and Advisor); (25) “Sundar Kand” of Ram Charit Manas; (26) The Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka—Told in Slow Motion (based on, and will have the full relevant Text of, Ram Charit Manas, Adhyatma Ramayan, Anand Ramayan, Geetawali Ramayan, and Kavitawali Ramayan); (27) The Great Ancient Sages, Seers, Saints and Enlightened Kings of India; (28) The Metaphor of the Hansa in the Upanishads: The symbolism of a Grand Swan used to explain the wisdom of spiritual and metaphysical principles by the Upanishads.

(A-2) Goswami Tulsidas Series: (1) Book 1- ‘Dohawali’; (2) Book 2- ‘Parvati Mangal’; (3) Book 3- ‘Kavitawali’; (4) Book 4- ‘Janki Mangal’; (5) Book 5- ‘Ram Lala Nahachu’; (6) Book 6- ‘Geetawali Ramayan’; (7) Book 7- ‘Vairagya Sandipani’; (8) Book 8- ‘Vinai Patrika’; (9) ‘Barvai Ramayan’.

(B) The following Books have been published in ‘Printed-Book Deluxe Editions’ by a reputed Indian Publisher (details given below) :

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2. English rendering of Adbhut Ramayan by sage Valmiki.
3. English rendering of Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.
4. English rendering of Devi Puran’s Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.
5. A Divine Biography of Lord Ram & Glory of Lord’s Holy Name.

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Phone: Mobile (Neeraj Gupta)—+919811133683

Office: 011-23286537; 011-32996391

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A full-blown English rendering of Tulsidas’ epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’ is under preparation. It will be a unique Book and an elaborate one, as it would run into many thousands of pages that would endeavour to explain each single verse of Ram Charit Manas in detail from different perspectives, with the aid of explanatory notes and references.

Contact details of Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia—

Postal address:-36-A, Rajghat Colony, Parikrama Marg, P.O.—Ayodhya, Pin—
224123, Distt. Ayodhya (Faizabad), U.P. India.

Phone:—(India) +919451290400; +919935613060.

Website: < www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com >

Email of Author: (i) < ajaichhawchharia@gmail.com >

(ii) < ajaikumarbooks@gmail.com >

Archive.org: < https://archive.org/details/@ajai_kumar_chhawchharia >

Facebook ID < www.facebook.com/ajaikumarchhawchharia8 >

Linkedin: < www.linkedin.com/AjaiKumarChhawchharia >

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